
DAVID AND ABIGAIL
BY
B. F. SAWYER





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Jos. A. Maguire
from
The Author

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BY

THE AUTHOR OF "LUCILE," "THE LADY PAULINA," ETC., ETC

B. F. Sawyer

"An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told."

KING RICHARD III.



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DAVID AND ABIGAIL.

CHAPTER I.

DAVID.

"VERY well, Jedge ; yer'll lemme know ter-morrer ?"

"Yes. To-morrow."

"That's right. Afore the bank shets, ye know. Mout I call round thar, or had I best ter come here ?"

"As you please."

"All right ; then ter be shore ov catching ye, I'll come myself. * Hit's allers certinest ter be on hand myself, as ye mout be bizzy. So good-mornin', Jedge," and with a complacent smile of exasperating good-nature, the unwelcome visitor bowed himself out.

He was an elderly man, his tall form slightly bent by the weight and toil of busy years. His eye was keen as a hawk's, but with a kindly glance that would have

charmed a baby. The gray in the scattering chin-whiskers had climbed up his cheeks and over his ears into the thin locks of his hair, and frosted a poll once black as a crow's. His dress, though scrupulously elegant, was made more for substantial comfort, than for show, although a rather vulgar display of diamond seal, studs and pin, showed a taste, if not perverted, at least not in harmony with the strong lines of character so legibly marked on his face.

His interlocutor was his contemporary in years, but his antithesis in all things else ; a well-born, well-bred, proud and dignified gentleman ; "one of the good old kind." Toil, nor the weight of busy years, had left no hard lines on his forehead, no silver threads in his hair. A life of wealth, of luxurious ease and elegant leisure, rounded into a career of social and political preferment, had been his. It was only of late that troubles had begun to come ; only as he had turned the downward slope of life, hitherto so sunny, that fortune had turned also. Hand in hand they, prosperity and he, had climbed together to the top, and now, hand in hand, they seemed to be tottering together down to the bottom. The fast-widening streaks of gray that were mottling his head

were of sudden springing ; one year ago not a single silver thread could have been found.

“ Oh, God ! my God ! what shall I do ! ” he groaned as the jealous door closed after his unwelcome visitor, shutting him in, alone with his humiliation and misery.

For a few moments he bowed his head in despairing perplexity, and then with an effort he roused up and reached for his office-bell. “ I must tell David ; it is a humiliating thing to do, but it is all that is left for me to do. Poor boy ! his own trouble was enough, already, without bothering him with this. Ah, false, cruel girl ! I could curse you for this,” and with a vicious jerk, as if it was the imaginary neck of a desperately naughty girl he was pulling, he rang the bell.

“ Yes, sah,” responded Jake, a smart negro fellow.

“ There is a speck of soot on your collar, Jacob ; how dare you come in my presence in such a plight ? Go out and cleanse yourself,” severely pointing to a little fleck of soot that had unluckily fixed itself upon the immaculate whiteness of the negro’s collar, a whiteness made snowy in contrast with the ebon neck it encircled.

“ Yes, sah, hit jist lit. I didn’t knowed

hit war dar," apologized Jake, backing out with a succession of salams. In a minute he returned, fleckless and spotless, in ebon and ivories.

"Now, find your Master David, and send him to me. You will likely find him in the library."

The obsequious negro hurried away, and soon the young master in question stood inquiringly before his father.

"Close the door, David, and sit down. I am very sorry to interrupt you, but I must tell you," said the Judge, without rising, as he motioned his son to a seat.

"I hope it is nothing serious that troubles you, father?"

"Yes, it is very serious and troubles me greatly, both on my own account and upon yours, my son," soberly answered his father.

"But you must not let it trouble you on my account. I have been thinking the matter over, and I am quite sure that it is best as it is. A girl so fickle, not to say false, cannot make a true wife. A woman who jilts her lover will—but I will not speak it of her. Let her go; only the blow was a hard one, harder, perhaps, because so unexpected."

"It would have been hard under any circumstances, and I am very sorry, for I did

love Gertrude as a daughter, but, my son, this is not all——”

“It is all that can affect me. If there is anything else you must let me help you to meet it.”

“Yes, there is something else ; and you must help me to bear it, at least with your strength, and your courage. It will require our united efforts to meet it.”

“All that I have, father, is and shall be yours ; only tell me what it is I am to do ?”

“You know the embarrassment of my finances ?”

“I knew that you were somewhat strained, but did not think it serious.”

“Ah ! serious, hopeless. Ruin irretrievable and disgrace is before me.”

“Oh, no ; surely it is not so bad as that ?”

“Yes ; there is no escape, no help. As Gertrude’s guardian I have used her money, twenty-five thousand dollars ; and now that she has married, I shall be called upon for a settlement and I have no means with which to replace it.”

“But surely this is not so bad ? Twenty-five thousand dollars ; we can raise that amount. Why not mortgage the plantation ? or else sell it ?”

"Alas ; it is already mortgaged for more than it will bring ; negroes and all."

The young man staggered, but strong in youthful courage and faith in his father he quickly rallied.

"Then sell the Arcade. I know that you intended it for me but let it go. It should easily fetch thirty thousand."

"The Arcade is gone too. In fact, my son, I should have told you all this long ago, but I did not have the courage to face you. I even tried to hide it from myself ; but everything in the world that I have is mortgaged for its full value. Even the homestead will have to go."

"And there is nothing to secure Gert—Mrs. Hardie, I mean ?"

"Nothing ; absolutely nothing. My bondsmen will have to suffer."

"That is sad."

"It is miserable. I would blow my brains out if it would restore the money."

"No ; that would not mend matters. It would be only a confession of guilt, where I am sure no guilt lies. But does she know this ?"

"She ; who ?"

"Gertrude, Mrs. Hardie."

"No. I was so sure of your marriage that

I felt no concern about the matter. It was her surprising perfidy and folly in running away with this fellow that has precipitated my ruin. If I only had time I could retrieve my affairs. I am sure to win the Willoughby case and that will more than suffice for all that I owe."

"But can we not gain time? We can stave off a settlement until after the fall term."

"No—that is impossible. Old Hardie has just been here and I am to answer him to-morrow."

"What! so soon? They were only married yesterday. And has she sent him already? Ah! false, fair woman! I had thought better of you than this," and in the bitterness of his disappointment, the young man bowed his face in his hands and groaned.

The father pitied the son's distress and answered softly :

"No; he did not come from her. He never even mentioned her name. It was on his own account that he came."

"And what has he got to do with it?" rousing up with a flush.

"It is to him I owe all this money. He holds the mortgages upon all our property, and he threatens to foreclose at once."

“To him ! to old Israel Hardie, the miserable miser ?”

“Yes, to him ; I am absolutely in his power. His word to-morrow can make me a pauper, and my daughter a beggar.”

“Then God pity us, for I had rather be in the hands of Shylock, the itching-palmed Jew of Venice, than to be in the power of this wretched man. Why, the very association is a reproach to our name. No gentleman can countenance him ; he is but little better than a gambler, a robber, a man who made his fortune by trading negroes.”

“He is low enough, I grant you, and I as keenly feel the humiliation of the disreputable association, but I can not, nor could I at the time, help myself. He bought the securities himself from the bank and I could not protest. In fact he virtually owns the bank itself. He is immensely rich, and despite his low breeding and dubious reputation he is correspondingly powerful.”

“Yes, a gilded pill, and society will have to swallow him. It was this, I suppose, the glitter of his wealth, that caused Gertrude to forget her breeding and to run away with his fop of a son.”

“Perhaps it was ; although, to do the chap justice, he is a good-looking young fellow ;

handsome and insinuating, and if it were not for his low birth and plebeian associations, I would say that Gertrude has made a very good match. As good as such a deceitful woman as she deserves."

"Faugh! she has disgraced herself and her family. I wonder that Ike does not hunt him down and shoot him. But she is nothing to me; heigho! But what is it the old codger wants?"

"His money first, of course."

"And to get it he will foreclose the mortgages?"

"Yes."

"How much do you owe him?"

"One hundred and ten thousand, five hundred and sixty dollars, or to be exact, as Hardie who had made the calculation himself, sixty dollars and thirty-seven cents."

"But the property should bring more than that."

"At any other time it would, but under the present financial depression and at a forced sale, it would not realize the half of it."

"But will he not wait? Is there no way to gain a respite? Have we no friends that we can appeal to for help?"

"I have exhausted the *venire* and find

none. Every one is anxiously propping up his own tottering fortune. The whole commercial fabric is shaky and I doubt very much if I could to-day secure an indorsement for one thousand dollars. All this Hardie knows, and he is swift to take advantage of my defenseless position. It is one of the saddest features about these financial upheavals, that the oldest and proudest houses are the ones to tumble, while the dirty adobes are left unscathed. I should not mind the loss of my property so much were it not for the loss that will follow to others ; my innocent bondsmen, and especially my old friend, Burwell Graves, who would have trusted me with his all. And Walter ; what can he think of Gussie's father when he is told that he is a defaulter, and that his own father must pay the forfeit ? Ah ! poor Augusta ! it will be hard for her."

"That is the saddest of all, the misappropriation of your ward's estate."

"Yes ; it was cruel. I shall never forgive her for leaving you as she did. Had she married you, as we all expected, all would have been well——"

"Never mind me ; I am glad that it is over between us ; let us come back to busi-

ness. You say that Old Hardie refuses further time ? ”

“ He gave me until to-morrow to decide.”

“ To decide what ? ”

“ Oh, I have not told you ? Well, never mind ; the thing is too absurd to talk about. Preposterous, preposterous ! ”

“ What is it ? ”

“ Oh, the old fool is demented, and I should not offend your good-nature by repeating his proposition.”

“ But if it bears on this matter at all, I think, sir, that I ought to be told.”

“ Very well. It would be annoying were it not so utterly ridiculous, and you cannot be angry ; but the proposition was about his daughter——”

“ His daughter ? I was not aware that he had a daughter.”

“ Yes, a chit of a thing, just eighteen, he says, whom the boarding schools have crammed with the conceit that she is an accomplished young lady. She is ill-favored as she is low-born. I recollect seeing her once during my canvass for the senate, when I stopped at her father’s plantation. That was before they took it into their heads to come to town and beat their way in society. She was freckled-faced, snub-

nosed, and had a foot like a bread-tray, and waddled in her walk like a gosling ; just such a daughter as you can imagine such a father to have——”

“ But what has his daughter to do with our affairs ? ” his son interrupted with a slight disgust.

“ Ah ! that is it. I knew you would wonder, but the truth is, the old fool is immensely vain of his daughter and has an insane ambition to marry her into social position ; he is jealous of his own ilk, and guards her like a Cerberus to prevent her from marrying one of the common herd : ‘ I want her to marry one uv the big-bugs,’ he said. Do you understand ? ”

“ I think so.”

“ Very well : the wretched old scoundrel, taking advantage of my restraint and emboldened, doubtless, by the surprising leap his son has made over the social fence, came to me just now with a proposition——”

“ To marry her to you ? ” his son asked, with a smile.

“ P-i-s-h ; no. That would not have been so monstrous, but he wanted you to marry her.”

“ Surely, you are jesting ? ”

“No ; indeed. Just as coolly as he had calculated the interest on my notes, he had figured out the possibilities and advantages of the marriage. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘I’ve bin a watching that boy ov yourn an’ thay’s a power o’ gum in ’im, and with Abby,’—shade of Lavena, her name is Abby!—‘an’ with Abby’s money ter push ’im on, an’ Abby’s grit ter scotch fer ’im ; thar’s no knowin’ how high he mouten clime.’ It was really too comical ! the patronizing manner in which he slapped me on the shoulder and challenged me to dispute the magnificent proposition.”

“You should have called Jake to kick him out of the room.”

“If the thing hadn’t been so irresistibly ludicrous, I should have done so, but the triumphant gravity of the old fool’s look disarmed me completely, and I had to laugh. Not to encourage him, however, in his Quixotic hobby, I told him that while you might appreciate the lady’s several thousand charms, to say nothing of her grit, I was quite sure that you were in no condition to marry ; when he quickly interrupted me : ‘Yes, but I’ll see to his condition ; I’ll fix all that, I’ve got a cool millyon in soak fer Abby, an’ if that don’t put the man she gits on top, I’d

jist like ter see the next one. An' 'sides that ;' he added, ' Abby's no slouch herself, but on a tite pull she's ekill ter a whole team an' a yaller dog under the waggin ; jest let's hitch them two together, an' shore's yer born, if the traces don't break the thing's bound ter move. Why,' he added, in a confidential whisper, ' we'll both hev a little gran-chile borned in the White House, jis' as certain as falling off a log.' ”

“ Tush ! ”—contemptuously—“ the man is an idiot.”

“ Yes ; but there is a desperate earnestness in his mouthings, David. It means ruin to me, my son.”

“ But how are we to help it ? Surely you cannot suggest the possibility of me humoring the old rogue's madness, and marrying this baggage ? ”

“ Oh, no. Nothing of the sort. Not with diamonds to gild the harness would I consent to see my son yoked with such cattle.”

“ And you told him so ? ”

“ Yes. I told him that while that was a matter with which I could have nothing to do, yet I was quite sure of your feelings on the subject of marriage, and that nothing could be more repugnant to your feelings, at this time, than the idea of such a thing.

He, however, insisted that I should speak to you about it, and promised to suspend action until he heard from you. He is to come to-morrow for his answer. You had better be present when he comes, and perhaps we can overcome the absurdity of his fancy, and prevail upon him to grant me a respite. Somehow you have his good opinion and you may possibly be able to convince him, not only of the equity of my Willoughby claims, but of the absolute certainty of a favorable judgment."

"Yes, I will see him, and I only wish that I could as readily convince him of the certainty of a favorable issue of the Willoughby claim, as I can of the utter impossibility of this other thing he wishes. I should like, however, for him to come early, as I have to meet Lawson at Red Oak, at one o'clock."

"Ah, yes. I had forgotten; poor boy, it is too bad for me to lay the burden of my distress upon you, when you need all your strength and energy for the canvass."

"Oh, never mind me. The tension will only nerve me to strike the harder. But, by the way, I was in the library, when Jake called me, looking up the debates on the Kentucky resolutions; can you give me the data?"

“Certainly,” and in another moment the carking, grinding cares of the domestic man were thrown off as a profitless cumber, and the two politicians lost themselves in the more congenial world of politics, statecraft and diplomacy.

CHAPTER II.

ABIGAIL.

It was an elegant room in an elegant house. Whatever might be said as to the plebeian origin, or of the plebeian habits, of the *parvenu* owner, nothing could be urged against the refined elegance and tasteful appointments of his present surroundings. The proudest aristocrat in all that aristocratic city, would have been proud of the appropriate splendor of that room.

It mattered not how vulgar the purse that paid for it, the taste that selected and the hand that arranged its furniture was the taste of a connoisseur, and the hand of an artist ; everything was luxurious, graceful, pretty ; the only thing seemingly out of place was the master himself. Awkward and ungainly he moved about, unconscious

of the incongruity, but somehow vaguely feeling a sense of misfitness. The luxurious *fauteuil* on which his daughter so gracefully reclined, would have been a hot gridiron to him.

“Hit may do fer you uns ; young fokes as wer borned ter sich contraptions, but as fer me I’d ruther hev an ole hickory stump, er a popler log, ter set on than ter hev a whole lot full uv sich jimcracks. The saftest setting that I ever sot, was on the hoss-block ov a nite, when I got in from plowing ; long time ago. Ah ! I members the time, jist as well as zif hit was yisterdy ; I was a boy, then, an’ they was good ole days, I tell ye. I wus jist a beginning ter fix up ter court yer mammy then, Abby ; she wus the sweetest gurrill that ever lived ; the purtiest an’ the sweetest. You minds me ov her offen, Abby ; you are more, an’ more like her every day.”

“Am I ? Then I am very glad ; my sweet mamma. Do you know I can remember her ? ”

“Mebby so, only you wuz a monstus leetle thing when she died ; you wuz jist four years old.”

“Yes, but still I am sure that I do remember her. I dream of her often and

every time she appears the same. Her eyes were brown, and so soft and gentle. Were they not pretty eyes?"

"Jist as purty az a fawn's, an', az ye say, saft an' gentle. Ah! they waz monstus purty eyes! an' she was a monstus purty 'oman, an' jist as good az she was purty. She waz a powerful good 'oman, yer mammy waz; too good fer me; too purty an' good an' sweet fer me. I offen wondered how on yeath I ever got 'er."

"Oh, no; I am sure that she loved you and that you loved her very dearly."

"Loved her? loved yer mammy, child? W'y yer don't know what yer talkin' 'bout. I'd a gin every blessed nigger on the place, an' would a died myself ter a saved her. Ah! talk 'bout trubble; but no one knows what trubble is, that 'hain't lost what I've lost. Ah me! But never mine; hit won't be long afore I'll go too. I somehow jist natcherly feels hit in my bones; and then mebbly we'll get tergether agin."

"Would you wish to leave me, father?"

"Well, no; that is, in course, I wouldn't like ter take yer along with me, case hit wouldn't be natcherly; but then, yer know that I can't allers expect ter stay here. An' that, mind's me, hunny, ov somethin' I've bin

talkin, 'bout ter day. Come, shet yer book up awhile, an' let's hev a little confab, 'bout it."

"Ah! what is it?" closing the book in her lap and looking up in pretty wonder at the sudden gravity of her father's tone.

"Hit's about marryin; but fust, lemme tell you; I seed Tom ter-day."

"Oh, did you?" and the wondering eyes drooped. "How did he look?" brightening up.

"Thes like a sheep-killin' hound. He knowed he'd acted mean an' the girl done it too."

"Did you see her? What kind of a girl is she?"

"Yes, I seed her, an' she's a right sniptious lookin' 'oman, only she's as proud as Lucifix, an' turned up her nose at me az zif I waz a wet dog. I lay she'll make Tom smell the patchin'; she's a regular tippy-bob an' Tom looks like a fool aside her. My notion is that Tom's niggled it. An' 'sides he fooled her, Tom did——"

"Fooled her? Oh surely, not."

"Yes; that's what he done, fer a fac'. Her uncle, Colonel Carden, axed me all about hit ter-day. Tom made 'em all believe as how he waz my own shore-anuff son, an' would fall heir to all my property."

“No, no; he could not stoop to such a deception?”

“Yes, but he did though. Tom’s a regular scamp an’ I’ve done with him. Why, you thes order a seed the look, when I told the Colonel that he wan’t scasely any kin at all ter me. That he waz my daddy’s cousin’s orfin chile that I had picked up outen the ash-pile an’ gin him a raisin’, an’ while I mought give him a little patch down on the crick, an’ a nigger, or two, to start on, I didn’t spect ter divide my fortin with nobody but you. The man looked thes like he’d ad bin shot; I could a knocked him down with a puff ov wind. An’, honey, do yer know as somehow or other I is glad that Tom is gone? Out ov your way, I means.”

The young lady flushed, and her father, putting his own construction upon the blush, continued :

“Yes, I knows as you didn’t mean anything wrong about hit, but I sorter seed as you an’ him was a kinder pea-vining to’ards one another. Thar, don’t begin ter flare up, but jist wait a minit tell I ’splains. I waz sorry ter see hit, fer though I know’d that Tom warn’t no ’count, an’ I had higher notions fer you,

yit, zif it had a comed ter a focus an' you had a set your head on marryin' 'im, I'd a thes shet my eyes on his nocountness an' a let ye rip; hush—wait another minit, but now az hits all over an' the 'bominable fool haz gone an' drapt ye fer this tother vixen, this lady disdain, why, bust my buttons, zif I hain't dinged glad ov it. Yes, Abby, I shorely iz."

The old gentleman paused a moment to giye her speech, but she sat silent and he went on :

"Now, hunny, tell me as you don't care a snap zif he are gone;" watching her keenly for the truth.

"No, father; indeed I do not care," and the truth spoke in her expressive eyes, as well as in the silvery sweetness of her voice. "I may have been silly, I know, but now I am glad that it is all over between us; that he has passed out of my life forever. I am sure that it is best; a deceitful lover could not make a true husband."

"You are mighty right; that's jist az true az preachin' an' I know'd hit all along; but still, hunny, fer your satisfaction I would a shet my eyes an' my mouth an' a let ye had 'im, an' a tried

ter make the best ov a bad bargain. But now, Abby, as he didn't have sense anuff ter know which side ov his bread waz buttered, we'll thes let him slide an' never think enny more about him. Eh, darlin'?"

"I shall think no more about him. Certainly I shall care no more about him," she answered, with spirit.

"That's right; that's thes what a spunky gurrill should do. Thar's a heap better fish in the pond than Miss Carden ever cotched outen hit with her pin-hook, I don't care how high she cocks up her nose. An' now, hunny, I'me a coming ter the pint: sense I would a bin willin' fer you to a married ter suit yerself, though hit would a went mightily agin the grain, now I wants ter know zif I waz ter pick ye out a nice, good-lookin' feller, a real born gentleman, would ye be willin, ter marry ter suit me. Thes ter please me, Abby?"

"Marry to please you?" opening the fawn-like eyes in startled wonder.

"Yes; that's hit."

"But why should I marry at all, father? Surely you are not wanting to get rid of me?"

“Oh, no. Not ter git shet ov you, but thes becase it is natcheral. All wimmin, sometime or other, are bound ter marry; they war made a purpose, an’ they are thes bound ter do hit; an’ if they can’t make a spoon they’re shore to spile a horn.”

“But, father, I have no wish to marry. There is no one whom I love—better than you,” she demurely added, after a little stop.

“Yes, but I’ve picked ye out a sweet-heart; he’s young, an’ good-lookin’ an’ he’s smart; got more sense in a minit than Tom ’ill ever have in a lifetime. He’s true an’ he’s honest, an’ he’s kind-harted; I’ze bin a watchin’ ’im, an’ tother day I seed ’im pick up a little nigger chile ’at had stumped his toe an’ fell a crying in the gutter; an’, aside all this, Abby, he’s ov good stock; one ov the best famblys in the state. He’s a gentleman; a regular pump-sole, waz borned rich an’ waz raised rich; is well eddicated an’ all that. Thes now his daddy is a leetle under the weather, in an’ leetle money tight, but that don’t matter; ye’ll have enuff fer both; an’ oh, my darlin’, I would be monstus proud ter see my purty darter married ter such a feller, an’ in such a fambly.”

The young lady did not speak, but the

large, expressive eyes grew larger as the wonder grew into a half fear.

“Yes, Grace,”—Grace was the name her mother had given her and he always called her Grace when in pathetic earnestness,—“yes, Grace, I have sot my ole heart on this match, an’ hit would make me so proud if ye would, an’ I do believe hit would break my heart if you won’t.”

The girl was touched, for Abigail Hardie was not an undutiful daughter. She had known and silently felt the sacrifice of all ambition, and pride he had made in yielding to the choice her inexperienced and slightly perverse girlhood had first made, and now that that folly had passed and the fatherly wisdom that had feared for her happiness, and had yet silently deferred to her choice, had been vindicated by the faithlessness of her lover, she felt that something in the way of gratitude, if not filial duty, was due him. And then, by some strange psychological chance, or coincidence, she thought of her mother, and in that moment of tender remembrance of the sainted dead and of daughterly reverence for the living, she bowed her soul to her father’s will; and without further question as to whom it was, or when it was to be, she answered, as

a Biblical daughter of one of the patriarchs might have answered :

“You have been good to me, father, kind and considerate in all things, and it is as little as I can do to obey you in all things. I can trust your love implicitly, and if you think it best that I should marry, then I will marry, whom you may choose, and whenever you will.”

“You are a good gurrill, Grace, an’ ye spoke thes then like yer mammy would ‘a’ talked. Ye haz made me monstus glad, case I know hit’s fer yer own good. I have not chused blindly, an’ I am shore he will love ye.”

“If I make myself lovable, I can compel his love,” she answered.

“Tu-by-shore, tu-by-shore. In course ye will. He thes can’t help hit. He’s bound ter love ye. But I don’t b’lieve that I’ve told ye, yet, who he is?”

“No ; please tell me?”

“Well, I don’t know az you know ‘im, but hits Mr. David Winston, a son ov the Jedge, only a heap younger an’ a heap smarter. The Jedge is sorter stuck up on his blue-blood, ye know ; fust fambly pumpsole pernella, white kid gloves, an’ all that sort ov thing, while David is bankin’ on

brains. Thar's a team fer ye : the Jedge's blood, David's brains an' your money, ter say nothin' ov yer purty looks ! I Golly ! hit makes me laff ter think about hit. Ye knows 'im, don't ye ?"

" Oh, is he the man ? I am so glad. Yes, I know him, or no, I do not know him. I have no personal acquaintance with him ; we are not in the same set, you know," with a little flush. " But I have seen him and heard him speak. I heard him night before last, at the City Hall. I went with Mr. and Mrs. Grey ; he was really eloquent and I was quite proud of his triumph, for of course it was a triumph, everybody said so."

" Yes ; he's a trump, both bowers and the joker, an' better 'an all he's a true-blue dimmycrat, an' he's thes as shore tu beat the hine-sights off ov Tom Lawson as the 'lection day comes round. I'll stake a cool thousan' on hit."

" Oh, I do hope he will ! "

" Oh, he's bound to do hit ; only, Abby, we 'ill have ter pitch in an' leg for 'im. An' that's why I'm in sich a hurry ter fix things up atween ye. I wants us ter help 'im. As I tells ye, the ole Jedge is in a money tight ; the facks is, Abby, he's dead

broke, busted higher than a kite ; an' poòr David 'ill have ter paddle his own canoe, all by hisself while Tom Lawson's rich wife is putting in her oar, an' thes a spending money by the barrel. So, Abby, hunny, zif you an' him can fix hit up atwixt ye, I wants ye ter do it right away, I don't care zif hit waz to-night. Marry at once, an' then you can roll up yer sleeves an' pitch in like a house afire. I'll plank down ten dollars for Tom Lawson's wife's one. Hel-low, what is it, Nanny ?" as a negro waiting-girl stepped in.

"Hit's a noat, Mr. Winston's boy fotched," she answered, presenting a letter, with a courtesy.

"Oh-ho ! a letter fer me ? Ye must read hit fer me, Abby, I hain't got my specks handy."

The young lady opened the missive and read :

"MR. ISRAEL HARDIE—DEAR SIR: My father informs me that you have appointed an interview with him for to-morrow. As I am interested in the matter in question, it is, perhaps, essential that I be present, and as I have an appointment to speak at Red Oak, at one P. M., I hope that you can find it convenient to call early, say at ten o'clock.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient and humble servant,

"DAVID R. WINSTON."

"Ah-ha ! that's all right. Whar's the nigger that brought hit ?"

"He's at de door."

"Then I'll tell 'im," starting out.

"Father, would it not be better to write the answer ?" suggested the young lady.

"Eh, well ? mebbly hit mought. Yes, I s'pose that would be the proper kink. But you must write hit fer me."

"Very well," and out she hurried to run up to her own little writing-room, or study, to indite the answer.

"Here it is," she said, returning a few moments later. "Shall I read it ?"

"Yes, read hit ter me."

"MR. DAVID R. WINSTON : I can readily accommodate my time to your own convenience, and will meet you at ten A. M., as requested.

"Very truly yours,

"ISRAEL HARDIE."

"That's the dictum. Thest az good az hizzen ; but, Abby, why didn't ye write on finer paper ; little sweet-smelling note with thing-a-majigs around the aiges ?"

"That would hardly be in good taste. This is a plain business note and it should be on plain business paper."

"That's a fac' ; bizness is bizness, an' hits

allers best not ter have too many curlimaques about it. Here, Nanny, give hit ter his man, an' here, here is half a dollar, give hit ter him fer good luck."

"Yes, sah," and courtesying out, the girl hurried down to the door.

"Yere, you nigger; yere's de letter. Young Mistus, Miss Grace writ it herseff. She kin write same's a man, Miss Grace kin; but you needn't go an' tell you young Marse so; an' yere, yere's a haff ole Marse sont yer; I'ze a great mine to keep hit myseff, though," presenting the note and holding up the tantalizing fee above her head, in true African coquetry.

"Tanky, miss; you's de purtiest waitin'-gal in all de town; come, gimme de haff, an' I'll give yer a kiss. Oh, hit's no yuse ter dodge, I'ze bound ter have 'em boff," making a grab for the coin and then holding her for the kiss.

"Go long wid ye, yer black nigger, you; hain't yer 'shamed ov yerseff, wid yer pro-jickin' rite yere on de whit folkse's door in broad daylight? Dar, den," complacently yielding, "take hit an' be off wid yerseff, afore Sam sees you an' bustes yer head fer you."

"Zif yer please, sah, yere is de note dey

toled me ter fotch ye, an' de waitin'-gal sez dat de young Mistus wrote hit sheseff," said Jake, as, hat in hand, he stood before his young Master a few minutes later.

The young gentleman carelessly opened and read it.

"Ah, this is well worded and neatly written, a very pretty and characteristic hand. I wonder if she really did write it? Pshaw, no! Of course not; she has an amanuensis, and that is much better than the gift of writing itself. What is the use of brains of one's own if one has the money to buy the brains of others. Ah, what a blessed thing it is to have money!"

CHAPTER III.

A FAIR BARGAIN.

"WELL, Abby, hit's nearly ten; 'ginst I walk over ter the Jedge's hit'll be time. Good-morning, hunny," tenderly kissing her good-bye. "What shell I tell yer sweet-heart?" in a more cheerful vein.

"Oh, I don't know," she laughingly answered, "unless I write across your

back, 'Barkis is willin','" and with a strange flutter, as if half scared at her boldness, she ran back through the hall to her room.

Promptly to the moment, the old gentleman knocked at the Judge's office.

"That is the old hound now. Show him in, Jake. Father, you must receive him, I really haven't the patience to talk to him," whispered the young man.

"Yes, you only be quiet and let me manage him. Ah, Mr. Hardie, is that you? I hope you are in good health this morning."

"Yes, Jedge, hit's me; good-morning, sir. I'm purty tol'able, thank ye, that is 'ceptin' a little tech ov the rumatiz in the left shoulder. Hope you find yourseff the same," effusively grasping the Judge's dainty fingers in his horny grip and giving them a squeeze that set every nerve in his system a-tremble. "Eh, an' here is Mr. David; Howdy do, sir, howdy," dropping the delicate hand of the father and seizing upon the sturdier palm of the son. "I'm rael glad ter see you. Hope I didn't keep yer waitin'?"

"No; you are on time."

"Yes, I allers is; I makes it a pint allers ter git thar."

"Of course; but as my own time is limited,

I hope you will be seated, and, dispensing with ceremony, proceed at once to business," a little ungraciously.

"Now, you're talkin'. Business fust an' ceremony arterwards. I hain't much on ceremony nohow, an' asides, I haz a lot ov other bizness ter tend to ter-day. Ter-day's return day, you know, an' I've a lot ov lame ducks ter look after."

"Well, sir, what is it I am to understand you wish?" direct from the young man, a little nettled at the suggestion of lame ducks.

"Hey! I sposed yer daddy had 'splained ever'thing, eh, Jedge?"

"My father has explained his unfortunate indebtedness to you——"

"Tu-by-shore," nodding encouragingly.

"And he assures me of his utter inability to pay it now."

"Ah! has he? then I am glad; that is I am sorry for the Jedge, but hit ain't so much the money I am after as the t'other thing."

"What other thing?" with a look.

"Why, didn't he tell ye? 'bout the marrying, ov course: you an' Abby."

"I hope, Mr. Hardie, that you are not seriously in earnest about that impossible thing?"

“ Earnest ! In course I am. In cool, sober yearnest. Why not ? ”

“ Because it is preposterous. I must tell you at once and for all, that such a thing can never be. I would not marry your daughter were she a solid lump of gold from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot.”

“ Well, I should say not ! an’ I wouldn’t ax yer zif she waz in that kin’ ov a fix. Why, she wouldn’t be no better’n a heathen nimmage. But Abby hain’t that sort ov a cat. She’s wuff her weight in gold, an’ the man as gits her will git hit, with a nigger throwed in with every pound, but thar’s no gold about her make-up, not even in her teeth; she’s all gurrill shore anuff, flesh an’ blood, pure, plump, an’ fat, every inch ov her, an’ as true grit as you ever seed.”

“ I beg your pardon, Mr. Hardie, but you misapprehend me. I have no possible doubt of the carnal genuineness of the young lady, nor do I question the substantial solidity of her corporosity, with its tempting jointure of gold and negroes; but what I mean is this : all these things, the gold and negroes, with a million more could never make me so far debase my manhood,

so far forget my family, to say nothing of myself, as to think of marrying a woman so far beneath me in everything that honorable men hold dear, or women hold precious."

The old man staggered as if stricken by a blow. It was a blow, a cruel, unmanly thrust, and it struck home to the heart. The young man noticed the hurt look, not resentful, but pathetic in its anguish, and he would have given much to have recalled the bitter words; but he could not, and before he could frame an apology the old man spoke.

"Ye speaks mighty plain, sir, an' mebbby hit is best, but I'm monstus sorry, sorry fer you, as well as fer her an' fer your daddy. I hed so sot my heart on the scheme, an' I wouldn't mine hit so bad zif I hadn't a went an' 'suaded Abby in the notion too. Pore gurrill, hit'll cut her feathers powerful ter have herseff throwed back at herseff like this. She hain't ole an' tough like me as have rubbed agin the world tell I've got usened ter hits jagged aiges, but she's as tender-footed in her feelin's as any lady in the land, I don't care whar they comes from. I've never in all her life let trubble come anigh her."

"I am sorry, too, that I spoke so plainly

—that I had to speak at all. I would not willingly hurt you, but I could not otherwise express my meaning. I only wish you to understand how utterly impossible this thing is," David answered, in a kind of subdued apology.

"Yes, I understands, an' as that pint is settled, we'll let it slide an' take up the tother one."

"Yes; what is it we can do?"

"I don't know what 'tis ye can do, but I kin tell ye what 'tis I wants. Ter-day is return day an' I wants my money?"

"We are very sorry, Mr. Hardie, but as I told you just now, my father has confessed his inability to pay you. The notes, as I understand, are well secured; could you not be generous and grant us an extension? We would be willing to increase the interest."

"Well, no! 'Tain't no yuse. Ye can't pay the intrust now 'thout makin' hit more, an' asides I don't want any more intrust; seven per cent. is anuff fer me. Big intrust allers makes poor debts, an' hits more than ye uns can pay. Ye see as how I'll hev ter talk a leetle plain, too; not as I is mad, nor disapinted, 'caze I hain't, an' zif I waz I'd not let that mix along with my bizniss. The man's a fool as will do that; mix hiz

feelings up along with hiz bizniss, he thes cuts off hiz nose ter spite hiz face. No, bizness is bizness an' spite is spite, an' the two won't mix; an' ter come square down ter the pint, the security hain't good; that is, I means, that hit is good anuff so fur as hit goes, but hit don't begin to reach the gooddy."

"You have a mortgage on all our property. That should be sufficient to cover every cent we owe you," feebly protested the young man.

"No, but hit ain't! If all the rale estate an' every blessed nigger ye have waz put on the block ter-day hit wouldn't bring the haff ov it."

"But you need not put it on the block. There is no need of a sale. I will transfer it to you in fee-simple now," interposed the Judge.

"Yes, but I don't want the property, I've got more sich now than I can yuse, and more lan' than I kin pay taxes on, an' more niggers than I kin feed."

"But you can hold it until you can realize its value, and then indemnify yourself for all cost."

"Yes; that would do zif times war like they used ter waz, but they hain't; and fur-

thersome more, they is a gitting wuss an' wuss. The longer I kept hit, the littler hit would fetch. Hit 'uld be like buying a sick nigger, with the galloping consumption, an' waiting fer niggers ter go up. An' afore niggers riz he'd lay down an' die an' then whar'd you be? No, no; thar's no sense in that. I knows yer bizness, Jedge, thest as well az you-uns know hit, an' mebbly a leetle more so, an' the longer I waits on you the wusser hit gits; the harder hit will be fer you ter pay, an' the less chance I will heve ter git my money. An' then, agin, thar's a nuther pint; zif I war ter take the property thes dry so, without a foreclosure ov the morgidges, I'd hev the Carden estate a bouncing on me like a duck upon a June-bug, fer what you owes 'em. The gurrill is married, yer know, an' will soon be arter you with a sharp stick fer the money. No, no; Jedge, hit won't do."

"But cannot you arrange it with your son to give me a little time on that matter?" pleaded the Judge, in abject despair.

"He ain't no son ov mine, Tom hain't. I've got no son an' I'm dinged glad ov it, fer he is a trifling puppy, Tom is; I don't care if I did fotch 'im up myseff, same as he'd a been my own."

“Not your son ! You surprise me ;” exclaimed the Judge.

“No ; I hain’t got nary chile in the wur-ruld, ’ceptin Abby, an’ I don’t want any, nuther. Tom Hardie hain’t nuthin’ but a tacky I picked up outen the woods, up on Harrycane crick, an’ I raised ’im like a whitehead, only ter hev ’im turn an’ bite me, like the snake we yused ter read about in the spellin’ book. No, Jedge, I’ve got nothin’ in creation ter do erlong with Tom, nor his wife, nuther. She holds her head too high fer me ; an the onliest way I see fer me ter help ye would be thes ter run my hand down in my pockit an’ haul out the spondulix ; which I ’ould a bin willin’ ter do zif this tuther little game had a worked. An’, even now, Jedge, I’d like ter help ye zif I could see my way outen the woods. But I can’t see hit. Hit ’ould be thes a takin’ the money as I haz saved up fer Abby outen her own pocket an’ a puttin’ hit in yourn, an’ that, I hardly think you’d like fer me ter do, seein’ as how we hain’t no kin ?”

“No, no, certainly not ; but, Mr. Hardie, I have other resources ; not immediately available, it is true, but they will be in time, a very short while, I hope. The Willoughby

claim is just and true, and I am certain to recover the full amount, with damages."

"Oh, yes, I've looked in that thing too, an' I think as ye will finally git hit, an' I hopes ter gracious ye will, fer I thinks, my-seff, that the debt is a just one, but then the law iz a mighty oncertain critter, an' hit 'ill be a monstus long time a coming. Hit may do your gran-chillen some good, but hit 'ill never buy socks fer your darter, nor yer son, nuther. But, Jedge, yer knows the law better nor I kin tell ye, but still, zif I war you, I wouldn't bank too much on the Wil-loughby case."

"But, my God, man, what am I to do?" groaned the Judge, as the astute old man hauled out and mercilessly rattled the bones of the hideous skeleton he had been trying so long to hide, even from himself.

"I don't see as ye kin do nothin'. I've waited az long az I reasonly kin, an' hit's no sorter yuse ter wait any longer. Hit would a bin better zif we had a closed hit up yisterdy, without all this wurry 'bout Abby, but I wanted ter give ye every chance I could. I don't say hit to scare ye, Jedge, but I can't see things az ye see 'em. I studied hit all out afore I comed ter ye yisterdy, an' hits no yuse a talkin', you's in a nine-

hole thest az certin az shooting. An' that's how I comed ter make the plot I did ter try an' bring hit all in the fambly, like, an' then I could step in an' help ye. I seed ye waz flat when ye couldn't see hit yerseff, an' I wanted ter lift yer up agin afore anybody else knowed it. I hain't no big bug myseff, but I somehow hates ter see a big bug get stuck in the mud. Hit puts fokes ter talkin'. An' thar's your son, Mr. David," reaching out his hand in unconscious protection, "I wanted ter help 'im too. I don't know why hit is, but somehow or nuther my heart has alless had a sneakin' hankerin' arter that boy."

"You are very kind, Mr. Hardie, and I must thank you for your goodness," cried the young man, instinctively reaching for the friendly hand.

"No; hits thes nacheral, an' I couldn't help it. Hit thes comed dry so an' you needn't mine it," patting the offered hand in a vague apology for the presumption of his kindly feelings.

"But cannot you help us, without binding our children to what may be to them both a lifetime of misery?" asked the Judge, in one more blind appeal for help.

"No, that wouldn't be nacheral; hit

'ould be sorter like givin' hit away ; an' I don't think, Jedge, 'zif ye 'ill look at hit a minit that ye 'ould like ter hev hit that way. Hit 'ould hardly be honerable, now, would hit, Jedge ?

“And do you think, sir,” fiercely put in the young man, “that it would be any the less dishonorable for me to marry your daughter, a woman whom I have never seen, and for whom I have no regard, not even so much as a decent respect? To marry her simply for her money?”

“Well, yes ; hits more like bizness, an' bizness is honerable, zif hits all square an' fair. An' that's what I waz wanting ter make this. I wanted no hiding o' faults or meannesses about hit like a trading in niggers, but I wanted ever'thing plain an' above board ; no juggling under the kiver ; but I wanted ye ter see Abby, an' if you can fine one kinky hair in her head, or one black spot on her character, then you needn't tech her with a ten-foot pole. Hit iz thest a matter ov bizness, an' ther's a blamed sight more honnerbleness in a straightforard bizness, than thar is in the law ; I kin tell yer that, Jedge, or in politics uther, Mr. David. But that hain't the pint,” he continued, after a pause to challenge dispute to

his axiom. "Now here's the way I looks at this bizness : you're a young man ; you've got sense, an' eddication, an' ambition, an' brass anuff ter match ; you've got a good name, an' come ov a good family ; you stands high, an' ye wants ter clime still higher. Well, I glories in your spunk, an' I'm for ye. You're a dimmicrat an' so's me, I allers was one an' I spect's ter be one tell Gabriel toots his horn ; I tells yer what's a fac' ; I'd ruther be a noxen than ter be a whig ; but thar's thes one thing ye lacks, young man, an' that's the one thing needful ; you lacks money ; the spizarinctum. Now, thar's no yuse a kicking, yer daddy's busted, too bad ter skin. I don't say this ter hurt yer feelings, but thest ter let yer see yourseff, as I sees ye, an' as the Bank sees ye. Here's all these papers ov your daddy, they calls fer a mint ov money, but unless I scratched my own name acrost they backs, I couldn't get fifty thousand dollars on 'em. I'm monstus sorry hits so, but so it is."

"Yes, it is sad," drearily acquiesced the young gentleman.

"Adzactly ; an' thar is thest whar ye stand. An' now, here is Abby : she's got the money, thest oodles ov it ; outside ov these

little things, I've got a cool millyun salted down fer her, an' what's hern would a bin yourn, an' that would 'a' put yer daddy on his legs again, an' 'a' put ye a long way ahead ov anybody in this deestrick. An' asides all this, thar's Abby herself; az I tole yer daddy yisterday, she's no slouch ter be grinned at, but a rael sniptious gurrill. She's powerful purty, zif I do say it, myself, an' she's smart; I've spent a sight ov money on her raisin' an' she's well eddicated. I lay she kin spell ever' word in the spellin' book by heart, an' I'll bet a coon-skin, that she can turn you down in Latting, er Greek, er even Dutch, an' she kin thest beat ole Tom Walker, hisseff, a playin' on the pianny. She's never bin about amungst the big bugs much, though she's got some nice gurrill friends what writes ter her from Charleston, an' Baltimore, what she got acquainted with at school. But as I was a sayin', round yere, she don't mix along with the pumpssoles much, caze she's monstus proud, an' she knos as how they all turn up thar noses at her ole' homespun daddy; but fer all that, she can hold a candle to any ov' em. Thar 'ould a been no need fer you ever ter be ashamed ov her, no, not even if ye tooked her to Congress

with ye. Hey ; mebbly ye think I don't know what I'm a talkin' about, but I does," as the young man had to smile at the absurdity of his enthusiasm. "I hain't much on style myseff, but I knows the right thing when I see it," and in ludicrous vindication of his intuitive breeding, the old gentleman triumphantly fumbled his flashy seals.

His auditors could find nothing to say, and pausing a moment for breath he continued :

"An' asides all that, she's got some grit herseff, Abby haz. Thar hain't a spunkyer 'ummon in all this town than she is ; an' ye thes git her dander raised an' I'd like ter see the gurrill, er man uther, in all this lay-out that could crawl over her. I tell ye, sir, that she'd a backed ye with teeth an' toe-nails, an' with her money ter push ye an' her grit ter back ye, ye 'ould thes 'a' been bound ter knock the hine-sights off ov Lawson. Why, sir, she's a plotting fer ye a'ready."

"She is very good."

"Yes, when I went home, yisterday, arter the talk I had with yer daddy, an' told her ov my plans, an' 'sueded her into the notion ; ye see, like ye she didn't take ter hit at the fust jump ; she didn't think hit right fer fokes ter marry thes so kinder off-hand like, without any courtin' or pea-vining, ye know.

She said as people should know something about each other afore they hitched together fer life ; thes as if young fokes a courtin' could ever fine one a nuther out, when they both are doin' thar level best ter show thar best pints an' ter hide thar wust ; but arter I argied the pint with her awhile, an' showed her how much I 'ad sot my heart on seeing her married in a good fambly, why she gin in, an' said yes, she 'ould marry thes ter please me."

" Ah ! she is a dutiful daughter," slightly ironically.

" Yes, she's allers been a good chile. An' then when I told her who hit was that I had picked out for her, an' that hit waz you, ye thest orter a seed her brighten up, an' it would a done ye good ter see how she lit inter Tom Lawson. Ye see she hearn you tother night at the City Hall, an' she come home chock full ov you an' your speech. An' then when I wanted ter sorter feel ov her like, an' told her how Lawson's rich wife was a planking down the money, an' that you had none to call his hand, she thes flared up an' sez, sez she, ' Father, we must see the blind and go ten better ;' or I mean, that is, she didn't say them very words, but that waz what she meant. And, I gad, sir ; I 'ould

'a' done hit. Fer every dollar Tom Lawson put down I'd 'a' put ten ; I'd 'a' thest pulled the bung outen the bank an' 'a' let 'er run, an' zif that warn't anuff I'd 'a' drawed on Mobile. But, sirs, that's all knocked in the head now, petered out wuss nor a bline nigger with the small-pox, an' I've got ter go back an tell her that hit's no go ; that she hain't no meat fitten fer sich a big bug az you. I'ze monstus sorry that I ever started it ; she'd 'a' never cared anything about hit then."

"I am very sorry too ; truly and painfully sorry. I must thank you, though, for the honor you intended me, and thank your daughter for her generous advocacy of my cause," the young gentleman answered soberly. "But the question recurs, again : what are we to do?" he added, with an involuntary glance at his father.

"That's fer you ter say, you an' yer daddy. I've had my say an' I've sed all I've got ter say. In course, I sees hit from another pint ov view than you sees hit ; I'ze a plain bizness man an' I looks at it from a bizness standpint. Mebby zif I seed hit as you uns see hit I moutent blame you."

"Father, what must I do?" and there was the pathos of despair in the appeal.

"Alas ! I cannot say. Would to God I knew what to do," answered the father, with a groan.

"Then I shall cut the knot at once. And, Mr. Hardie, if you will permit me to withdraw my hasty and insulting words and be kind enough to renew your proposition, I will accept your offer and will marry your daughter."

"Tu-by-shore I will renew hit. I hain't never took hit back yit, an' it's the best bargain ye ever struck in yer life ; so lets shake hands on it," grasping the reluctant hand and giving it an excruciating squeeze.

"Yes ; I will marry Miss Hardie—I presume she is a miss ?—but you must understand, and she too, that it is wholly a matter of business. I give her my hand and name, but nothing else goes with it ; I can give her no love ; no love is possible ; even respect is hardly probable. She marries me for my name and social position and I marry her for her money."

"Yes, that's all hunkydory, an that's the way Abby sorter put hit herseff."

"She must be an eminently practical girl ?"

"She is that ; she never looks at things cross-eyed, an' this iz perzactly what she sez,

sez she, 'Ov course I don't expects him ter love me at the start, havin' never seed me, but zif I makes myseff lovabul, an' he is the gentleman I takes 'im ter be, I'll compel 'im ter love me; and zif I'm not worthy ov his love I won't deserve hit, nor I won't expect hit.' "

"Ah! very prettily said. Then I am to understand that she thoroughly appreciates the situation, and that she is willing?"

"Yes, she understands, an' that is adzatzly what she sed agin this mornin' when I toled her good-byé. Sez I, thes ter tease er like, 'Abby,' sez I, what shall I tell your sweetheart fer you?' An' she flushed up redder en' any rose, an' then she laffed an' sez, sez, she, 'Oh! I orter chawk hit on yer back an' let 'im read hit fer himseff: Barkum is willin' er waitin',' I don't perzactly 'members. Hit waz kinder Greek ter me an' I couldn't make head nor tail ov hit, but I spoze hit is some ov these little quips she haz picked up outen some ov the outlandish books she's bin a readin'."

"Ah, yes, Barkis is willing; that is Greek and shows your daughter gifted with a fine sense of humor, as well as classical erudition. Barkis and Peggoty; two fools well met, heigh-ho! why not? But now, Mr. Hardie,

to return to 'bizness,' when do you propose to lead this one precious ewe-lamb of yours to the sacrificial altar?"

"Nan?"

"I mean, when do you wish to complete this trade, to sign, seal and deliver the goods?"

"Oh, yes, I see; the sooner the better. You're bizzy with your electioneering, an' 'll want the spondulix right away, an', asides, the Cardens mout call the Jedge ter taw, an' I wants 'im ter be ready, so ye kin marry at oncet, an' let the thing go on. Ye sed ye'd be bizzy ter-day er I 'ould say go over at once, an' have hit over. Thar's no yuse a waitin'."

"But the lady, is she quite ready?"

"Oh, yes! Abby's a minit man, Abby is, an' yer'll allers find her reddy. Zif I wuz ter go right home now an' say, Abby, we've got ter start to Jerryco ter-night, kin ye git reddy? she'd say, yes; an' call Nanny an' go ter packin', an' I lay that afore I could go an' git the tickets, she'd hev her trunk out on the sidewalk a settin' on hit a waitin' fer the waggin. I tells yer what, young man, you've got ter keep yer socks on zif you keep up with Abby. So thes say when an' she'll be reddy, armed an' equipt as the law directs."

“Very well ; as you say, this is strictly a matter of business, and I can see no good reason for delay. I shall not get back from Red Oak until late in the evening, or I would suggest eight o’clock to-night. I shall have to speak at Philippi to-morrow at one P. M., but I can possibly find time in the morning to attend to the matter. It will take but a few moments, and by driving hard I can make the time up. Will you engage to have her ready by, say 10:30, in the morning?”

“Oh, yes ! I’ll fix ever’t’ing. She kin git her trix ready ter-night, an’ I’ll get the lisens, an’ see the passin’. Ye kin marry at the house.”

“Yes, that will save time.”

“Tu-by-shore, an’ asides, she hain’t much ov a han’ fer show, an’ ’ould druther have a privit weddin’ anyhow ; only ye kin fetch as many ov yer friends as wants ter come ; they’ll all be welcome, an’ I reckon they’ll find a plate an’ a glass full an’ a waitin’ fer ’em.”

“Thanks, you are very good. You will present my devoirs to your daughter ? or perhaps I had best write her a note ; it would be more like ‘bizness’ ; will you kindly carry it ?”

“Tu-by-shore I will, an a bunch of

hollyhocks, or poppies, zif you want to send a posy."

"No, thank you ; had I anticipated this interesting dilemma, I should have certainly provided a basket of poppies suited to the emergency, but never even dreaming of the surprising stroke of 'bizness' I will have to rely upon the lady's good grace to excuse any laches in sentiment."

"Yes, she'll understand."

The young man turned to his table and hastily wrote an ungracious note, and then, without reading or revision, he addressed and handed it to her father.

"Will you kindly hand this to Miss Hardie, with my most dutiful regards? And now I see," consulting his watch, "I haven't a moment more to lose ; I must leave you and my father to adjust the details of the settlement. I shall be promptly on hand in the morning to fulfill my part of the contract. I shall come at 10:30, sharp, which will give me thirty minutes in which to woo, win and wed your daughter," and seizing his hat he made a bolt for the door, when his father gently detained him.

"One moment, my son," rising up and drawing him toward the door of the private

consultation room, or confessional, as the lawyers irreverently call it. "Let me see you in here a moment before this unholy compact is irrevocably sealed."

"I have but a moment ; please speak quickly, for I have already decided," the son answered, closing the door behind him and facing his father.

"Can you do this thing, David ? Can you make this creature your wife ? this woman the mother of your children ?"

"I can marry her at least, and that is all the old Shylock stipulates for. I can mumble the ceremony of marriage, but she will never be wife of mine ; she will be mother of no child of mine ; I should expect a hybrid monstrosity ; an idiot with a tail, or a gorilla without one. No, sir, you need not be uneasy for the species of your descendants through me. There will be none by this old hound's daughter."

"But, David, this is monstrous, brutal ! The woman has rights."

"And I," almost fiercely, "shall give her the freest latitude in which to exercise them. I shall give her my name and she may gild it in brazen letters on her coach and drive through Trinity Church itself, for all I care ; but that is all I shall give."

“But if she is not so repulsive as we think ; if she turns out to be worthy——?”

“Then that puts the onus of infamy upon me ; if she is worthy to be my wife, I am utterly unworthy of her, and should be ashamed to ever stand in her presence. If she is what I expect her to be I shall despise her, but if she is anything better she must despise me, and in either case, I can have nothing to do with her. I shall marry her to-morrow, and then I shall hurry away and care not to ever see her again in the world. You can finish your business with the old man, and I shall be promptly on hand,” and pulling his hat savagely down over his ears, as if to hush all further cavil, he turned from the room and dashed away.

CHAPTER IV.

CHANCE, DESTINY OR PROVIDENCE ; WHICH ?

“WELL, Abby ; we’ve got the thing fixed at last, an’ ever’thing is squeegee, an’ you’re ter be married ter-morrer mornin’ at haff arter ten o’clock, ter the second,” said the old gentleman, with a little triumph, as his

daughter met him in the hall, on his return from the bank.

“To-morrow? so soon! That is impossible,” protested the young lady in consternation. “The haste is unseemly; really indecent.”

“No, hit’s not; you thest hold your tater, an’ let me ’splain. Thar’s no yuse a waitin’ nor no yuse a fixin.’ Hit’s only a privit weddin’, with nobody yere ’septin’ the fambly, an’ then hit’s all right. Everybody iz willin’ an’ hit’s nobody else’s bizness. You’ve got plenty ov clothes good anuff. David ’ll only drap in fer half a hour an’ then he’ll hav’ ter make tracks ter the speakin’. They speaks at Philippi ter-morrer an’ he’ll have ter whoop it up, ter be thar in time. Ye mus-sent spect much courtin’ an’ rose-buddin’ an’ hunnying, an’ sich like, ’til arter the ’lection. Tom Lawson ’ill gin ’im as much az he can tote without ’im dally-diddling with you. I knows, though, that you won’t want ter keep ’im frum hiz work, you’re too smart a gurrill fer that. Thar’ll be time anuff fer pea-vinin’ arter we ’lect ’im ter Congress. You’re ter be married at ten, an’ yer had better tell Sealy ter fix up a little snack ov cakes an’ persarves an’ pies an’ things, with a few bottles ov champain, ter

drink yer health in. Yer knows how ter fix hit? The Jedge 'ill be here an' I 'spects his darter 'ill come too, an' as many more as they can fetch. Zif yer need any flowers an' sich like, thest send fer Mr. Galceran an' have 'im ter fix 'em, tell 'im thest ter spread heseff, I don't care a ding if it cost a thousan' dollars. I 'll see Mr. Davenport an' have 'im ter come over an' tie the knot for you. David is gone ter the speakin' at Red Oak an' won't be back tell late ter-night, an' then he 'ill hev ter pole right back in the mornin' to meet Lawson at Philippi. But hit's all fixed, hunny, an' you need'n look so jubus; thar'l be no shenanygin about hit. He toled me ter git the license an' ter have you ready. He toled me ter give you his devours, with his best love, an' toled me ter hand you this letter, an' he'd a sent you a bunch ov holly-hawks an' sich like, only he sed he didn't know that he would a needed 'em so soon; so come, darling, you mussent go ter crying now. Tut, tut! hunny, don't cry. Hit's not a goin' ter hurt you. Sho! yer needn't mine hit at all. Thar hain't a nether gurrill in all the town but wouldn't give their eye-teeth ter be in yer place. Now, now! don't cry, but take the letter an' run up ter your own room an' read hit ter yerself."

The young lady, with a sorrowing perturbation, took the letter and hurried into the secrecy of her own chamber, as much to hide the disquieting fears and to wipe away the unbidden tears, as to read the message itself.

For a moment she stood by her window, absently holding the letter in her hand, lost in a strange daze, and then shaking off the feeling she broke the seal and read :

"MISS HARDIE : Your father, presumably with your approbation, has told me that you two have thoroughly discussed the matter that so intimately concerns us both, and that you are familiar with, and appreciate, all its phases. Without commenting upon the propriety of the methods or the wisdom of the step, I have only a hurried moment in which to tell you that, to relieve the sore disquiet of my father, I have—not without serious misgivings as to the future, but with an honest purpose to do my duty—consented to the extraordinary proposal he made, and will—*Deo volente*—be with you to-morrow at 10:30 A. M., to speak before the holy man of God the vows of love and regard you may hardly expect me to feel. When I come to know you I may possibly learn to love you ; until then, it would be an unmanly hypocrisy in me to affect any other than a respectful regard.

"Very truly,

"DAVID R. WINSTON."

"Oh, this is hard, this is cruel!" she cried, and the tears came afresh; and then, all unconscious of the volition, she sank

upon her knees, and pressing her forehead against the window she prayed :

“Oh, God ! the Father of the motherless and the Counsellor of the friendless, teach me the way I should go, the thing I should do. Oh, mother ! my sainted mother, if it be possible for thee to hear me, come to me now and help me to decide. Breathe in my soul the words I should speak, and move me to do that which is best to be done.”

For nearly five minutes she knelt thus, helplessly praying for light and for guidance, but no divine message came ; no saintly whisper of duty ; and then she arose, despairingly, perplexed as ever ; but casting her eyes around, as if in a further dim groping in the dark for an oracle. By chance—or was it by fate?—her glance fell upon her Bible, the precious book that had been her mother’s, and, with a little gasp, she seized the book.

“Ah ! it is written. I shall find my duty here,” she cried, and with that intuitive reaching out into the mysteries of the unknown, which, unconsciously to us all, guides every human hand, she opened and read :

“ ‘And when the servants of David were

come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her saying, David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to wife. And she arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said : Behold, let thy handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. And Abigail hastened and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her. And she went after the messengers of David and became his wife.' ”

“ I wonder,” she murmured, as she finished reading it over for the third time. “ I wonder if this can be a revelation, or is it but chance—chance—coincidence, an accidental grouping of words and letters—David and Abigail,—Ah, no, this is more than chance, this is a divination and I shall accept it as the ordination of my destiny,” and carefully reading it over again, syllable by syllable and word by word, she reverently closed the volume and turned to her letter.

“ Ah ! ” she said, after reading it over once more, “ it is not really cruel, and it may be kind. It is frank and honest, and that is always the best. It would have been so easy for him to have written flattering words and deceived me with heartless pre-

tensions. I ought to thank him for his candor. And I do thank him; between us there should be no deceit. I should know that he cannot love me now, for he has never seen me; he would not even recognize me were we to chance to meet on the street. Ah, me ! I wonder if he wonders how I look ? I hope he thinks me ugly, I should so like to surprise him, he is so handsome himself," and fully conscious of a rare womanly beauty in herself, of manner, of figure, and of face, she cast an admiring glance at her own lovely self in the mirror. "Ah !" she went on, smiling approval at the radiant reflection, "Ah, David and Abigail, I must study the story of their lives and see if they were happy. What wonderful stories are to be found in the Bible, and how much like a Biblical story is the beginning of this, for David did not court Abigail, he simply sent his servants for her to Carmel. And what is it he says ? the new David, my David ? Ah ! here it is," referring to the letter once again. " 'When I come to know you I may possibly learn to love you.' Oh, what a sweet possibility, and, oh, how I shall strive to teach him ! I wish he had written nothing else but this, no other sentence, no other line. But these shall be

all I shall remember, 'I may learn to love you.' To love you—ah! to love you,—to love you! Ah! that is enough, a hundred pages could not have added to its fullness; a poem in one line, a whole world of happy possibilities epitomized into one little 'when.'" And cooingly repeating, "David and Abigail; to love you—to love you," she tenderly folded it away to hide it in the most sacred of her sacred repositories.

And then, when she had locked her treasure away, there came a wish to answer it, a desire to say something on her own part, and in her own behalf; to let him feel, or at least know, that cold, hard, and mercenary as this most extraordinary proceeding might seem to others, she, at least, was guiltless of a single sordid thought; that she could hope to find in it all a something higher, purer, and sweeter than any suggestion of worldly gain, or of worldly ambition.

And thus moved she wrote :

"MY DEAR MR. WINSTON : Your note of this instant was handed to me by my father, and though no answer may be expected, I find myself constrained by the wish to write. I cannot tell you the pain and humiliation its perusal cost me at first, but after a moment's reflection I realized my unhappy position ; and, while shrinking from your coldness, I must yet thank you for your candor. I

should regret to know that any dstraint on the part of your father, or constraint on the part of my own, should impel you to take a step so momentous. If there really be such, I beg you to consider this matter ended at once, as I cannot become a party to such a sin against an ordinance so sacred. If, however, for other considerations (mercenary, if you please) you are willing to place the honor of your name and the happiness of your life in my keeping, it shall be the proudest aim of my life to maintain inviolate the one, and its sweetest endeavor to perfect the other. I shall be ready to meet you to-morrow and very happy to welcome you, but I shall not despise you if you do not come. If you should come, may I venture to request the presence of your sister, Miss Winston? I should wish so much to know her. I should write direct to her myself but am uncertain of her grace; and then, if I am really to be your wife, I must prefer that whatever of gladness, of pleasurable associations the future holds in store for me, should come all through you.

"With feeling quite the reverse of cold regard, I must subscribe myself, and shall ever remain, your sincere friend and well-wisher,

"GRACE A. HARDIE.

"October 20th."

Having carefully enveloped and sealed it, she carried it down to dispatch it.

"Here, Sam, is a letter for Mr. Winston, the young lawyer. I wish you to take it yourself, to be sure of its safe delivery. Take it to his office and leave it with his man. You know the place, 124 Winston Street?"

"Yes'm, I knows."

“Very well. Here is a dollar for his man. Tell him to be sure and hand the letter to his master the very first thing he does after he comes.”

“Yes’m,” and off posted Sam, while she turned to her father.

“Well, Abby, what’s he say?” asked the old man, in anxious sympathy with the thoughtful shade on his daughter’s brow.

“He says but little. A simple business letter; only, father, there is one expression which troubles me. He speaks of the dstraint of his father, as if by some secret power, or unfair advantage you had over him, you are compelling him to this step. Is this so, father?”

“I don’t know, hunny, what it iz you means by destraints, ’less’en it’s that the ole Jedge iz busted, which he iz for a fac’; but I didn’t bust ’im an’ I holes no secret power over ’im.”

“And it is to get you to help his father that his son agrees to marry me?”

“Well—er—yes. When yer comes ter bile hit down, that’s about the size ov it. Hit’s thest as I tole ye, yisterdy, only a little more so; wusser, I means. You sees the Jedge, asides the tuther things he owes, was gardeen for the Carden gurrill, Tom’s wife,

an' he has spent all her money an' now he's got ter anty up, he can't raise the stake."

"But can't you help him without this—this bargain of—of me?"

"Well—er—yes, I'spoze I kin. I can thes give 'im the money, make 'im a Christmus present ov hit, but that wouldn't be bizness. I'd be a fool ter offer hit an' he'd be a dinged rogue ter take hit; but he ain't that sort ov a man, he's a honerable man, the Jedge is, I don't care if he did slip up an' busted. An' so is his son David, he's the honerablest ov the two, an' they both iz honerable. An' asides that, I hain't no fool nuther. So the bestest way for us all ter do is ter thest hitch you two young colts together an' then hit will all be in the fambly. An' he sees it too, David do, though he kicked like a mule in a yaller-jackit's nest at fust. You see, Abby, they's a big fambly, the Winstons be, the biggest an' the grandest in all creation—regular blue-bluds away back yonder from ole Ferginny; the Pokerhunters, an' the Fairfaxes, an' the Marthy Washingtons an' all the tuther big bugs as we read about, an' they's monstus proud ov thar breed, an' it liked ter sallivated 'im, the idee ov marryin' you, one ov the pegbotoms. They's silk-sowed pumpsoles, they is,

an we'uns is only yaller pegbottoms. They sort, yer know, kinder looks down on our sort."

"Ah! yes, I know. But have they just cause? Tell me, father, the truth, is there any reason why I, as your child, should be despised? Is there any reproach upon your name, or life, or character, or upon my mother's, that would cause David Winston to blush to own me as his wife? If so, tell me now that the pain of learning may be spared me hereafter, when it may be too late."

"No, Abby, thar's nuthin' that no 'onnest man orter be 'shamed ov, 'cept in that I waz borned a poor man an had ter wiggle my way up from the bottom; I don't know as I ever done a right real low down thing in my life. I never hurt any man, nor 'umman nuther; I never cheated even a nigger outen a picayune; I've made money, that's a fac', thes oodles ov it, but if I ever toted a dishonest dollar in my pockit, I hopes ter goodness that hit will take the dry rot an' that all the rest 'ill catch it an' crumble away into devil's-snuff. Hit's true, too, that I yused ter bet a little on the hoss-races, but I allers won, an' when I helt a good hand in a game ov poker I warn't easily bluffed, but I

never cheated, nor renigged in my life. An' as fer your mammy, hunny, God bless her sweet heart, thar'wurn't a purer nor a truer, nor a better 'umman in all the old thirteen states than waz your mammy. Yes, nor a truer lady, I don't care zif she waz borned in a log cabbin an' had ter ride a mule ter mill when she waz a gurrill. No, Grace, thar hain't enny thing wrong about you, an' you needn't be afeered ter face a camp-meetin', in the broadest daylight that ever shined."

The girl, with a flush of genuine pride, kissed her father.

"There," she said, "you have made me very happy; happy and proud, and there can be no derogation to him, nor his family in marrying me?"

"No! in course thar can't. Hit 'ill be the makin' ov 'im and the savin' ov them. But as I said afore, hit wuz a bitter pill an' it made 'em gag; thay is so proud, you know, an looks on us pegbottoms sorter like we looks on a passel ov free-niggers. But David is a chap ov mighty good sense, an' has plenty ov grit, an' he soon seed as how hit was no yuse ter kick again the double-tree. The ole Jedge was kerflumixed an' that fixed 'im."

"I am very sorry."

"No, I don't know as it much matters. When big folks makes ducks an' drakes ov thar money, thay must expect thay children ter have ter paddle in the mud ter fine the aiges. But, now, darlin', I've got ter be a stirrin' an' you'd a-better be beginning ter fixin' up your weddin' trix, you hain't got much time ter fix in, but I wants you ter be thest as fine az a queen. I'll sen' Mr. Snooks over ter see 'bout fixin' the furniture, an' I'll send Galceran, an' you kin tell 'im how you wants the flowers. Stufferagen will see 'bout the cakes an' Sealy can baste the meats, and when Sam gits back tell 'im ter see 'bout fixin' up the niggers. I wants ever'thing ter be thest as fine as if hit was the guvner's darter as was a gwine ter be married." And tenderly kissing his daughter good-bye the old man hurried away to complete the disenthralment of Judge Winston, from the danger that so perilously threatened him, from his quondam ward.

It was late in the evening, before David Winston returned to his office and then the tracing by a slender thread, winding through a labyrinth of uncertain records, an uncertain paragraph made in an uncertain speech by his adversary on an un-

certain occasion, occupied all his thoughts until long after midnight, and then, utterly exhausted by the long day's work he went to bed, and it was not until ten o'clock the next morning, after he had washed the heavy drowsiness from his eyes, that he found Miss Hardie's letter, not in his office, but lying on his dressing-case, where it had been slyly placed but the moment before, by the careful hand of Jake, who while still jingling the young lady's gratuity in his pocket had entirely forgotten to deliver it the evening before.

"Ah ! what is this ? ' David R. Winston, Esq., *En Ville*,'" reading the superscription. "An invitation to Mrs. Bullwinkle's *fete musicale* ? Ah ! I am getting too old for such airy dissipations, charming though they always must be," he continued, tossing it aside unopened.

"Ziff you please, Marse David, dat's an 'ote wat de Hardie nigger fotched. He sed hit waz frum hiz young mistus, old Hardie's gal," cautioned Jake.

"Oh ! the devil ! when did he bring it ?" retouching it with a shiver of disgust.

"Thes now, sah ! Thes dis berry minit, an' he waz in a monstus big hurry, an' toled me ter wake you up an' give hit ter you

rite away. I wuz thes a fixin' ter han' it ter you, soon's yer got dressed."

The young man opened, and half curiously, half critically, read Miss Hardie's letter.

"Ah ! this is a fairly written letter ; the chirography is beautiful, thanks to the cleverness of her amanuensis. What a clever writer he—or maybe it's a she—must be. I wonder if he, or she, is to be thrown in with the gold and negroes ? Let me see. A pound of gold for every pound of girl, and a nigger or two for every pound of each. What a magnificent dower, and what a fortunate dog I am ! Jake ! do you know that I am to be married to-day ?"

Jake tried to look wise, but the astonished whites of his eyes betrayed him.

"Yes, sah, I knowed hit. But iz yer, fer a fac' ?"

"No ! not for a fact, but for a lie ; a miserable, debasing, mercenary lie. Yes : I am to be married at 10:30 sharp, and it's ten now. I haven't even time for breakfast. You should have waked me sooner. Here ; you had better get me another coat, and a white vest ; my best dress-suit—a man should be decently dressed even though he is to be hanged. But, no ; never mind, I

would have to shave, and I haven't time for that ; this will have to do to mount the block in. Jake ! were you ever sold ?”

“Oh, no, sah ; I wuz borned an' raised by ole marster. I'm a thoroughbred Winston. Your mammy, she had me.”

“Ah ! happy Jake, never to have been sold and never to have felt the shame of it ! Here, tie my cravat. Do you know that I have been sold ?”

“Oh ! no, sah ! Iz yer ?”

“Yes, sold. Old Israel Hardie has bought me. You know old Hardie ?”

“Now, Marse Dave, yer is thes a pro-
jeckin' wid me ? W'y ! all we niggers think
we seffs above dat set. Dey's buckra frum
de jump go.”

“Yes, I know, but it is true, nevertheless.
Ah !

“ ‘True, tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true !’

He has bought me for his daughter.”

“Now, Marse Dave.”

“Yes ; indeed it is so.”

“What fur she wants you ?”

“Oh, she wants me for an ornament.
She's tired of her poodle and wants me for a
monkey. To drive me around in her car-
riage, to take me to balls and to picnics,

and to exhibit me generally, just to let folks see what a fool money can make of an ill-born woman, and what a hound it can make of an impecunious man. You have heard the story, Jake, of the apples in the horse pond ? ”

“ Yes, sah.” Jake was wondrous wise and had heard everything that his young master could possibly suggest.

“ Well, she wants me for her apple, to give credit to the puddle.”

“ Well, well, sah ; Marse David, zif ye didn’t look so sober——”

“ You would think me drunk ? ”

“ No, sah ; but I’d tink dat youze thes a foolin’ me.”

“ No, it is so, Jake, I assure you. I have been sold, and paid for.”

“ How much you fotch ? ”

“ Oh, a fancy price, you may be sure. Much more than I would be willing to give for myself now. But there, that will do,” as Jake finished a vigorous brushing of his back and legs, “ hand me my hat and gloves, and tell Dick to fetch the buggy around. I told him to harness Nip and Tuck as we will have hard driving to-day.”

Jake hurried away, sorely puzzled to make out his master’s meaning—“ ’spe-

cially dat apple bizness,"—while the young gentleman drew on his gloves and with a sickly smile at himself in the mirror he turned from the room.

"She asked me to invite my sister. Ah ! I wonder if she could possibly imagine what a humiliating thing it is she asks of me ! But I will see Gussie and tell her ; I will have to learn to face my degradation, and I had as well begin at once. Where is your mistress ?" he asked of her maid, as he met her in the hall.

"She's in her room, sah, thest a cuttin' up."

"Go tell her to please come, I wish to see her a moment."

"Oh, Gussie, you are crying ! Father has told you, then ?" he asked, as his sister came in, in hysterical sobs.

"Oh, my brother ! how could you do such a miserable thing ?" she cried, sinking on a chair.

"You must not cry, Gussie, I could not help it. A hard fate has forced it upon us, for it is for you, my sister, and for my father, that I do this thing. If father has told you, it is of no use to go over the wretched story again. I only wanted to tell you that I have a note from Miss Hardie

and she offers her compliments to you, and would be glad for you to be present. Will you go, sister?"

"If it was to your funeral I might, perhaps, find heart to go, but not to this. You should not ask me."

"Ah, well! I am sorry, but I do not blame you; only you must not be too hard on me. There is Dick with the buggy, and I must be going; I am already late. Bye," and stooping and tenderly kissing the weeping face, he hurried out and away.

CHAPTER V

THE WEDDING.

THE great Janus-faced clock in the Capitol tower had struck the half-hour, and the dainty little cuckoo clock on the drawing-room mantle had verified the count, while the silent fingers of the tall, old-fashioned, pendulum clock in the dining-room were pointing to the figures 10:30, when the spanking team of David Winston, urged to a two-thirty trot, came dashing around the corner, and in an instant more was brought

to a stand before the high-arched gate of 570, Colbert Avenue.

Handing the reins to Dick, the belated groom lightly sprang to the ground and hurried in, with a lugubrious look on his face, as if it was into a dentist's office he was plunging to have an excruciating molar extracted. All things were ready, and a little anxiously waiting. His father had preceded him, and had been there some time, silently sitting in a confused wonder at the surprising magnificence of the room. The Reverend Mr. Davenport, in canonical robes, was there, complacently solemn, while the old gentleman, effusive in politeness, was for the first time in his life positively fidgety in the exuberance of expectancy.

"Ah ! thar he is now ; fetch 'im in, Sam," he exclaimed, as the hurried knock on the door came sounding through the hall.

Sam, with the dignity of the Queen's Chamberlain, responded to the knock, and hardly before the echoes of the alarm had died from the hall the door was opened and the groom was ushered in.

"Ah-ha ! thest in time ter the secund. That's bizness," cried the old gentleman, fairly crushing his fingers in the spontaneity of his welcome.

“Thanks—ouche—ah ! excuse me, I was so busy last night that I overslept myself, and feared that I should have to apologize for being late,” wrenching his aching fingers from the friendly grasp.

“No, yu’ze thest in time, as punctal az the bank hitself, an’ ever’thing else is reddy cocked an’ primed. The Jedge is yere an’ kin tell you that ever’thing hez been settled, fair an’ square atwixt us, an’ I’ve paid off Tom’s wife, ever’ blamed cent ov it, an’ the passin is yere with the lisenzes, an’ Abby’s got her trix on an’ iz a waitin’. Yer ’ill fine her in her little drawin’-room acrost thar ; Nanny ’ill show you,” and giving the half-scared young man a shove, that nearly upset his equilibrium, in the direction of his daughter’s boudoir, and motioning Nanny to conduct him to the bride expectant, he turned to his factotum : “Sam, call ’em all in now ; thay wants ter see thay young mistus married.”

Sam had only to open a side door, when they came pouring in ; such a rush of black, slick-faced, spread-mouthed, smartly-dressed negroes as threatened to deluge the spacious room. Sam, however, had had them trained, and decorously they took their places, forming a semicircle around the little dais which

had been raised, and over which hung an enormous bell of snowy roses.

The notice had been short, but everything had been arranged in graceful as well as tasteful completeness.

"Yere, Miss Grace, I've fotched 'im," said Nanny, ushering the passive groom into the radiant presence of the blushing young lady.

Never before, in all his life had young Winston been oppressed with such a humiliating sense of his own unworthiness, such an overwhelming consciousness of moral meanness and moral degradation, as he did that moment when he stepped into the sacred presence of the woman he had so reviled. Too much abashed to look once in the lovely face, he had only time to note the queenly presence and lissome grace of motion with which she rose to meet him. With an awkward groping he offered his hand, forgetting in his humiliating aberration to remove his stiff riding gauntlets.

Gracious as a queen she placed her own soft, fair hand in his. The gentle touch recalled him, and dropping her hand he quickly drew off the impeding glove.

"I fear that I have kept you waiting," he apologized, this time bowing respectfully and tenderly reaching for her hand.

"Oh, no, sir ! Had you not come, at all, I should not have been greatly disappointed. I was not quite certain that you would come," she answered, and he had to wonder at the marvelous sweetness of her voice.

"And you would not have cared ?"

"I may not say that ; but I could not, at least, have blamed you."

"No ? It would have been more manly in me not to have come. But I must explain ; I did not read your letter until this morning ; not twenty minutes ago," he said, apologetically.

"And had you received it in time, would it have changed your purpose ?" she asked.

"No, no. My purpose is not so easily changed. I fear that you will find it more obstinate than otherwise, and I am here to consummate the—the tra—I mean the arrangement agreed upon with your father. If you are quite ready, and will pardon my unseemly hurry, we will proceed at once with the ceremony. I believe that I explained the urgent pressure that is upon my time ?"

"Yes, I understand, and I am quite ready."

Drawing her hand through his arm, he led her in, to take their stand under the

roses and to kneel on the velvet-cushioned dais.

The ceremony was the beautiful but solemn one prescribed by the Episcopal liturgy, and it proceeded without untoward incident, until the minister paused and looked to the groom for the ring. David looked blank and stammered something inaudible; Abigail blushed, more rosy, more lovely than ever, and an awkward hitch was imminent; the ring had been forgotten. Judge Winston realized the laches, and was the first to act. Slipping a heavy cameo from his finger, he moved to offer it, when her father, with a sudden dive in the capacious pocket of his breeches, drew out a weather-beaten buckskin purse:

“Hold on—don’t, Jedge; just hole’ yer tater a minit, passin! I’ve got the very trick,” he cried, fishing out a bit of faded blue flannel, the unwinding of which brought to light a thin, well-worn, gold ring, hardly thicker than a thread. “Yere, hunny; yere’s the ring; hit wuz yer mammy’s weddin’ ring, an’ I’ve saved hit fer you. Ware it, darlin’, an’ when you gits mad with David, thes look on hit an’ think ov her, afore you begins ter scold.”

The young man took the ring, a poor,

miserable, little excuse for a ring, and as if impelled by a magic touch, reverently kissed it, and then handed it to the minister and the ceremony went on, all the more impressive, perhaps, because of this little interruption.

The Judge was the first to offer congratulations. Wringing his son's hand in a kind of contrite enthusiasm, he murmured :

"May the good God bless you, my son ; bless you and yours ;" and then drawing the blushing bride to his breast, he kissed her. "And you, my daughter, my heart blesses you, too ; may His love keep you and bless you always."

"Your blessing is very precious to me, sir," she answered sweetly, and then, like an Amazonian charge, the negroes made a dash upon her ; first her good old nurse, Mammy Lucy, with a screech that startled the Judge, bounded forward, and pounced upon her. Catching her in her arms, she commenced a frantic pounding over the shoulders, crying between sobs :

"Oh, my darlin' young mistus : my hunny chile ; my precious baby, wat I'ze suckled myseff a millyun times, an' rocked you ter sleep a hundred more ; oh, you'ze de sweetest, bestest, an' purtiest young mis-

tus as wuz never married befoh in all my born days ! Oh, my chile, I'ze so glad dat I'ze libbed ter see dis day !”

“Go 'long, Maum Lucy, an quit yer pro-gicken, an' giff me a chance. Do'an yer see dat yer'ze a knockin' de breff outen de chile, an a spilein' all de laces an' de ribbons on her buzzom, wid yer slobberin' ?” interrupted Aunt Sealy ; tearing the other aside, and laying a still more boisterous affection upon the victim. “Yu'ze my chile, too, hain't yer, hunny ?”

And then the others, one by one, with a tear and a blessing for the darling “young mistus ;” interrupted at last, by the master :

“Come, folkses, we all know that David hes ter go ; his time's nearly up, now, but I reckon that we'll have time ter eat a snack, an' ter drink a health to the young ones ; so come rite along ter the dining-room, an' let's jollify. Come, David, I'll 'scort you an' the passin, an' the Jedge kin fetch Abby,” and seizing an arm of each, he hurried them into the dining-hall, where a most tempting collation of fruits, cakes and cold meats was spread, to be eaten standing.

Judge Winston, still wondering at the

surprising beauty and charm of the bride, offered his arm, with the most cavalier and courtly grace he could command, and led her after.

"Now, my friends, these fixin's waz got ter eat an' ter drink, so you kin thest roll up your sleeves an' pitch in," cried the old gentleman, in hearty hospitality. "Come, passin, lay holt, an' you too, David, thes sail in. We didn't fix any regular dinner, caze hit warn't the reg'lar dinner-time, ye know ; but as Abby thought as how may be as you had ter drive so fur that you mout get hongry afore you got a whack at any, she 'lowed as we'd have a little cole snack ter sorter stay yer stummick like ; so thest pull off an' wade in."

"Thanks, and as I haven't yet breakfasted, it is a lucky providence to me."

"What's that yer say? Hain't had no breakfast? Abby, d'ye hear that? This young man sez he hain't had any breakfast ter-day."

"Oh, I am sorry that I did not know, that I might have ordered something warm. It is not yet too late. I can have it still. It will only take a moment. Sam, tell Aunt Sealey to have some coffee and eggs and toast, in an instant," cried the young mis-

tress, dropping the Judge's arm in a little dismay and turning to look after her husband's comfort.

"Oh, no ; not on my account. By no means. My sluggishness deserves a punishment. And besides, this spread is ample. I could wish no better," he protested, feeling a slight compunction for the wifely solicitude so needlessly wasted on himself.

"No ; I insist upon it ; you must have a warm breakfast, if it is only an egg and coffee. Here, take a seat at this table. The gentlemen will excuse you. And here is a basket of fruit as a relish," and with an irresistible insistence she drew him to a table, forced him to be seated and helped him to the fruit.

"Thanks. This is much better than I deserve. Will you be seated too ?" fastening upon a delicious orange.

"Not until you are served. Ah ! here is the coffee," as Sam—the veritable slave of the wonderful lamp—came in, followed closely by a waiter with steaming coffee, delicious cream, smoking eggs, and by rare good luck, a cut of the most delicious tenderloin the epicurean taste of the young gentleman had ever tested.

Deftly she drew the coffee and arranged

thè viands, and then with a sweetness that touched even him, she said :

“ And now, sir, if you will help yourself and will excuse me, I will return to our guests ? ”

“ Certainly. My appetite needs no coaching. I am positively ravenous,” he answered, falling to with a zest that confirmed the averment, while she turned to the others, where the inroads already made upon the buffet told that robust health needed no ceremony.

His breakfast finished, the young gentleman rejoined the others at the sideboard, when the old gentleman said :

“ Now, Sam, you’d better begin a poppin’ ov the corks.”

Sam was an expert with the corkscrew, and soon the delightful aroma of champagne was filling the room.

“ An’ now, chilluns ; you must drink each other’s health. Yere’s a glass,” filling a goblet and handing it to the groom ; “ Drink ye both ov it. Drink ter one anuther an’ ter—ter yer—yer fambly.”

The young man took it, a little ungraciously and handed it to the bride. She placed it to her lips, kissed the foaming brim and handed it back to him. With a

strange perversity, for which he despised himself the next moment, he seized it, almost rudely, and holding it a second, as if tempted to dash it in the old man's face, he raised it to his wide-opened mouth and gulped it down, as if it had been a cup of hemlock, at a single swallow.

The young lady noticed the strange discourtesy and it cut her. Judge Winston also noticed it, as he noticed the hurt look that came in her eyes, and with a strangely tender yearning in his heart, he turned to her.

"My daughter," he said, filling a glass and offering it to her, "I must beg you to consecrate a cup for me. Will you touch it with your lips that I may drink to your happiness, both in this world and in the world to come?"

She took it and reverently kissed the sparkling lip, while an unbidden tear dropped in the amber tide. With a blush she turned to throw it aside, and to fill another, when the gallant gentleman interfered.

"No, no," snatching it from her. "It is hallowed now. The pearls of Cleopatra could not make it so precious as this. And now, my daughter, here is a health to you :

If the graces of mind and heart can approach the exquisite loveliness of form and face, thy life must stand as a pattern for the angels to walk by."

"You are very good, sir, to think so kindly of me," she answered simply.

And then the rector, full of good cheer and bubbling over with kindness, struck in :

"As the rector of Mrs. Winston, I must be permitted to respond to your very appropriate sentiment. I have known her from childhood ; indeed, I may say from infancy. Her sainted mother placed her in my arms to be christened ; I stood by the bishop, when he laid his reverend hands upon her devout head, I have watched her as she grew into lovely womanhood, the petted darling of a luxuriant home, and the mistress of everything that wealth could buy, and though the angels may not look to human excellence for a pattern, I can say that, in all these years, I have never known her to give utterance to a single thought, or do a single deed that an angel itself might blush to have done. And you, my young friend," turning to the young husband, "should never suffer the sun to go down without falling upon your knees and thanking your

God, for giving you such a wife ; the sweetest and best gift of His providence."

The young man hesitated a moment, and then, constrained by a sense of politeness, said :

"In behalf of the lady, I must thank you for the very pretty tribute you have paid to her moral worth, and you, too, my father, for your gallant compliment to her personal charms. You are both very kind, and I am sure she is not ungrateful. But before I can appropriate to myself so much moral and personal excellence, I must first try to make myself worthy of it. And now, I regret very much to have to interrupt, so far as my going may do so, the festivities of this occasion ; but I suppose that you are all aware of the exigencies of my canvass, and can therefore excuse my going. It is now past eleven o'clock, and I have to be at Philippi, twenty miles away, at one."

"Oh, yes ! bizness is bizness, an' we all understand. Thes you go rite erlong. Bizness afore pleasure, as the feller said when he thrashed his wife afore he kissed 'er. Abby knows, an' she kin wait ; can't yer, Abby ?"

"Oh, yes ! You must on no account neglect your interest for me. You are looking

for your gloves, sir? I think you dropped them in my boudoir. Nanny, go fetch Mr. Winston's gloves," she ordered, noting the nervous searching of pockets and beating of breast, in quest of the unlucky gloves. In a minute Nanny returned with the gauntlets, and drawing them on he said :

"Thanks! And now I must say good-bye."

"I will walk with you to the door," slipping her hand through his arm, "I shall expect to hear a good report from Philippi," this as they passed into the hall.

"I shall do my best. In truth, I have to do my utmost. I find that I have taken a Herculean task upon myself."

"Is the political stable so much dirtier than you thought?"

"Oh, it is not the stable! I have not the temerity to undertake that. No, it is one of the Golden 'Apples,' I have rashly essayed to pluck, but I find them more difficult to reach than I thought. Lawson claims them as his own, and I fear that I shall need an Atlas to ever get one."

"I wish I could be the Atlas, or else one of the Hesperides, I think I could steal one for you. I wish so much to help you. If my good wishes can avail, you have them,

most assuredly. I shall be so proud of your success."

"Thanks. You are very good."

"When—when may I expect to see—see, you again?" she asked a little stammeringly.

"I can hardly tell you. You must not think me discourteous; but the fact is, I have an appointment to meet every day until the election, next month, and each appointment carries me farther away. We speak to-day at Philippi, and to-morrow at Grafton, twenty miles beyond, so there is slight chance of my being in the city again until the campaign is finished. The program," he added, dimly feeling that something further in the way of an apology was needed, "was all arranged, before this—this 'bizness,' as your father so bluntly calls it, was even thought of, and I may not hope to change it. My adversary is an adroit trickster and would be swift to take advantage of any laches on my part. The American Sovereign is more coy than the American maiden, and one has to woo more persistently to win. He permits no division, nor diversion of attentions during the canvass, or courtship, rather. As you have graciously dispensed with my devoirs so far,

I must trust you to still further indulge me until the more exacting sovereign is wooed and won."

"Certainly, sir, I shall not expect any attention that it may inconvenience you to give. I wish you success in your wooing—and I may further trust that you will find more satisfaction in the winning than you have found in this. I will not keep you longer. Good-bye, sir," offering her hand.

They were now at the door; there was no one in the hall and there could have been no possible offense against prudery for him to have taken a kiss. Surely had he known the sweetness of the lips that were so graciously ready to give one, he would not have turned away with such a bitter sneer on his own, nor with such a demon of shame, hatred and pain gnawing at his heart.

"Good-bye." And an indifferent shake of the timorous little hand was all that he gave.

She stood at the door and looked after him—that tall, handsome young man, the husband who had not yet looked into the glorious beauty of her face, the wondrous depths of her eyes, until he had lashed his spirited horses around the corner and was whisked out of sight, and then, waiting only

a little moment to wipe away all suspicion of tears from her eyes, she went back to her guests.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAIR BRIDE.

JUDGE WINSTON uneasily felt that an unnecessary pain had been inflicted upon that innocent girl, and he was almost obsequiously tender in his manner, as he led her back into the parlor.

"I am sorry," he said, whisperingly, as if half to himself. "I mean," he added, noting the puzzled look of inquiry in her face, "I am very sorry that we did not know you better before."

"Or else not known me at all?" she asked, without acerbity, but in respectful earnestness.

"Oh, no! I am truly glad that this has all come about. I feel that you are to be a new gladness in my life; that you are to bring joy to my home and peace to my life. I only meant, by being sorry, that we have been very unjust to you; that we have sadly misjudged you. I can only express

my sorrow and hope that we can make amends."

"Yes, I know that I have been despised as an interloper, for society is unjust as well as merciless. But if I may only hope to gain his confidence, to win his love, it will more than compensate. Oh ! sir, can you tell me what it is I can do to draw him to me ; what witchery I must practice to overcome the repulsion I can read in his face ?" she cried, with a pathetic yearning in her voice.

"You need do nothing, my child. No witchery is necessary, save the subtle witchery of your native sweetness. Only let him see you, as I see you, now, and his heart will open to your sweetness as the flower opens to the warmth of the sun. I am sorry that his other duties take him away from you so soon. I am anxious for him to know you, for to know you will be but to love you," he answered soothingly.

"You are kind, sir, to think so, and the thought makes me very happy ; he himself was good enough to write that when he comes to know me he might possibly learn to love me. Ah ! I wonder if he will ever know how fondly I treasure that sweet possibility ?"

“He will learn in good time, and with the knowledge will come the love that is so richly your due. And in good time he will also learn to know and to esteem your excellent father. You may not know what a good friend your father has been to me and my son ?”

“Yes, I know that my father is a friend to you, and that he loves your son almost as he loves me. I am sorry that society raises such a formidable barrier between us.”

“No, not formidable, or at least not impassable. Your father has taught me that manly worth, is above all conventional distinctions ; that a rugged, homely virtue is superior to the most polished of courtly graces ; just as your surprising loveliness, my daughter, has shown me that the perfection of womanly beauty can be found elsewhere, than in the exclusive homes of the aristocracy.”

“Now, Abby, give us a chune ; I golly ! if my ole shoulder didn’t twitch so bad I’d git my ole fiddle down an’ we’d set the Jedge an’ the passin a dancing ter that good ole hoe-down :

“ ‘ ‘ Possum up a gum stump, raccoon in the holler,
Purty gal at our house, fat as she kin woller.’ ”

Ah ! well I rikollect how ole Jim Goff played that very chune that very night, an' how me an' yer mammy danced hit, the night we war married, I means. No purtier, no sprier dancer ever turned a pardner, nor shook a purtier foot than your mammy. She wore a number two shoe, an' I 'members I had ter make a leetle slim last a purpuse ter make her shuze on. They was thest like yourn, Abby. Poke out yer foot an' let the Jedge see hit—I lay hits the purtiest foot he ever seed. Eh ? well then, yer needn't mind ; yer needn't turn so red, but come an' give us a chune anyhow. Eh, Jedge, do yer like music ?” broke in the old gentleman, warmed by the extra potation in honor of the occasion, into a hilarious remembrance of his own happy wedding-day. “The passin yere, is thest hunky on it,” he continued, without giving the Judge time to respond : “’specially when Abby sings one ov her ole love songs fer 'im. Eh ! Doctor ?” giving the rector a friendly dig in the ribs with his thumb.

“Yes, she sings very sweetly, and I am always delighted to hear her,” readily assented the reverend gentleman.

“And I too, am passionately fond of

music. Will you sing one of your songs for me ?" asked the Judge.

"I will be glad if I can please you," she answered simply, as she took her place at the piano.

The Judge, to prepare himself against another surprise, expected to hear a passable boarding-school performance, but he was not prepared for the burst of song that flowed, a liquid, breathing stream of melody from her silver throat, as she sang the simple old English ballad she knew her rector loved so well to hear.

"Eh, Jedge; how is that fer high? Kin yer side ov the house beat hit?" triumphantly whispered her father, as the last ravishing trill fairly lifted his fond old heart into an ecstasy of delight.

"That is heaven itself," answered the Judge, stepping softly to her side and stooping to kiss her head. "This has been a day of surprises to me," he whispered, "but this last is the sweetest surprise of all. I must thank you for it."

"I am only too glad to please you," and the brimming tears told how tenderly his words had touched her.

"It more than pleases me; it fills my soul with rapturous delight. Where in the world

have you been keeping this wonderful voice all this while?"

"She has been wasting it upon us two old men, her father and me," spoke in the rector, with a smile. "Don't you think us selfish to appropriate such a delight all to ourselves?"

"Wasting?" she asked; "then you have only been flattering me all this while, with the pretense that you enjoyed it."

"No, no. We did enjoy it, but it was all too good for us."

"Too good for you? Then I shall be sadly puzzled to know what further use to make of it."

"I tells yer, Jedge," cut in her father, "she's thest been a savin' hit all fer David; eh, Abby? Yer needn't blush so."

"Then David should be a very happy man; but I shall have to beg one for myself, if only one. David may never miss it."

"Oh! I shall always reserve one for you—for you and my home friends," she smilingly answered, softly touching the keys for a suggestion.

"Sing 'Ole Robin Gray' for the Jedge; that allers sorter makes me feel a little sorter solumcholly-like."

"Auld Robin Gray" was rendered with

such touching pathos as to draw tears from the three old men.

"An' now gin us somethin' funny ter make us laff agin," cried her father, moping his eyes.

As sparkling in comedy as she was tender in pathos, she soon had them smiling again, and then the rector rose up and went to her.

"Now, give me 'Bethany,' and let me go."

As the angels might have sung it she sang "Nearer my God to Thee," and then the man of God, tenderly laying his hand upon her bowed head, gave her his blessing and went on his way.

"Now, Jedge, I'll hev ter leave you an' Abby ter get acquainted with one anuther, while I has to do a little figgerin' in my room. I've a little bizness as needs fixin', an' bizness iz bizness, yer know, with me, an' so you kin thest make yourseff at home. Abby is thest as much yourn now az she iz mine, an' 'less I'm monstus mistakin you'll soon be thest as proud ov her as I am myseff."

"Yes, I am really and truly proud of her already," answered the Judge, as the old gentleman politely bowed himself out. "And now, my daughter, I wish to look at you good," taking her hand as she arose from the piano, and leading her into the full

light of a window ; “ your beauty is so surprising, so different from what I expected, that I wish to identify it as real, and to fix it in my mind as a joy forever.”

And the beauty of Abigail was indeed a surprising one ; and what made it the more perplexingly sweet, it was full of surprises :— each look, each turn of the face, each shade of color seemed to unhide a lurking beauty. Her face was one of those rare faces which embodies in one a dual style of beauty, both surprisingly distinct in characteristic charm, but each exquisite in its own peculiar loveliness.

Standing *vis-a-vis*, looking into the fair, open face, the large, lustrous brown eyes, with their exquisitely-arched brows and long silken lashes of jet ; the sweet mouth and the peachy, dimpled chin, one beholds a Madonna in her sweetest form of passive loveliness. Then turn to the side and silhouette the profile against the crystal air ; the glorious crown of hair, flossy as silk and dark as the raven’s wing, the snowy forehead, the inky eyebrow, the drooping eyelids with the long sweeping lashes, the pretty nose, slightly “ tilt-tipped,” the thin lips piquantly curled, the classic chin and the gracefully-poised neck, soft and white as

the swan's, and lo ! Venus herself, in all her enchanting loveliness, stands before you, a pleasing surprise for the moment and a constant gladness for all time. Her form was perfect, her stature slightly above the ordinary height of woman, her motion lissome and graceful, and to this beauty of form and loveliness of face was to be added a still more exquisite charm, that indescribable charm of manner and sweetness of expression that can make even a homely woman look lovely and sweet.

For a moment the Judge, with a critically refined taste, studied the beautiful picture, the most completely lovely that his eye ever beheld, the young lady submitting to the inspection with a slightly puzzled air that lent at one and the same time soberness to the *vis-a-vis* and piquancy to the profile.

“ Ah ! I see you are puzzled, but you must not think me impertinent,” he said, as the expressive eyes began to dilate into wonder under the crucial steadiness of his look. “ It is not an idle nor impertinent curiosity that attracts my gaze. I was only wishing that my son had seen you as I see you now. But never mind, he will see you, for I shall tell him. But now, daughter—or, what name shall I call you ? ”

“If I felt more secure in the—that is, I mean if—if—I felt as sure of his love, as I—I shall hope some day to be, I should wish for no dearer name than daughter; but until he tells me that I may claim it, somehow, sir, seems a mockery, and I must ask you to call me by my own name,” she answered.

“And that is what?”

“My name is Grace Abigail. My mother called me Grace; my father calls me Abby, after my mother. I believe, sir, I should like for you to call me Abigail.”

“Ah! so be it; Abigail. And you know that my son is David—David and Abigail; that is a coincidence. Ah! let us hope, a happy one,” he answered cheerily.

“Oh! sir, I must tell you, and you must not laugh at me for my faith, nor call it superstition, for I—I am not superstitious. I do not believe in dreams, nor signs, nor in ordinary stichistry; but when he, David—Mr. Winston, I mean, wrote me such a cold formal note, yesterday, proposing to marry me, I was sorely troubled what to do; I could not decide for myself, and I had no mother to go to; I could only ask my God to help me, and I got on my knees and prayed to Him for guidance; but feeling no strengthen-

ing help, I arose from my knees in a blind despair, when my eyes rested upon my Bible, and it came to me that I would find my answer there. I opened the book, and the first words that caught my eye were those concerning the betrothal of David and Abigail. I can repeat the passage, for it is rooted in my memory," and in a voice strangely sweet she repeated the story: "‘And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her saying ; David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to wife. And she arose and bowed herself on her face, to the earth and said : Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. And Abigail hasted and arose and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her. And she went after the messengers of David and became his wife.’ Now sir, was that chance ? a mere coincidence ; an accidental finding of two names thus linked together ? Was it Destiny or was it the hand of Providence that guided me in answer to my prayer ?”

“Let us accept it as the oracle of God, and trust to His providence to bless your union,” he answered, reverently kissing her ; and then after a moment’s sober silence he con-

tinued : " As David is not here to carry you to our home I must ask you to go with me. I wish Augusta to know you."

" Augusta ?"

" Yes, my daughter. Your sister."

" I should be glad to know her. I asked her to come ; that is I wrote him to ask her, but—but——"

" Yes, I know ; I understand ; but like all of us Augusta did not know. As I said before, we have sadly misjudged you ; you must forgive us. And you will let me bring her to see you ? I will bring her this afternoon. I am so anxious for you two to know each other, for I know that you will soon learn to love one another."

" Oh, yes ; if she will only come. No false pride shall hold me back from meeting her more than half-way ; please bring her ; even now. Perhaps she will dine with us ; and you too. Remember that it is my wedding dinner," she added a little playfully.

" Yes, that will be pleasant. I will go at once and fetch her. You can tell your father," and delighted with the suggestion he hurried away on the moment, to break the surprising news to his daughter.

" Ho ! iz the Jedge gone, a'reddy ?" asked the old gentleman, coming in a moment

later, to find his daughter sitting alone at the window, wistfully looking far away, in the direction of Philippi.

“Ah ! I must tell you. He has gone after his daughter, Miss Winston. They are coming to dine with us, to-day.”

“Eh ! is thay ? That’s good, an’ you must tell Sealy ter put the big pot in the little one an’ make dumplins ov the skillet. Tell her thest ter spread herseff. But, Abby,” sinking his voice a little drearily, “she’s monstus proud, she ez, an’ she’s never seed me an’ hain’t yused ter my pore-fokesy ways, an’ ez I wants her ter love you, ’thout knowin’ ennything ’bout me, I thinks hit best as I should be outen the way when she comes. I’ve got bizness at the bank ennyhow, an’ you kin thest ’scuze me ter the Jedge.”

“Father, I should despise her forever, were she to think slightingly of you. If I must lose you to gain her, or him, or any one else in the world, I shall not care to gain them. You are dearer to me than all others beside,” she cried, clinging to his arm affectionately.

“Yes, I knows, hunny, but you won’t hev ter lose me. When they comes ter know you thay won’t think ennything wrong o’ me. When she loves you she won’t despize

me ; but till she sees you fust she mussent see me. I knows, Abby, an hit's all right. Human natur iz human natur, an' you can't change hit no more'n the Esop can change hiz hide, nor the lepperd his spots. Now ye thes lemme work hit. I'll be down at the bank, an' you kin tell the Jedge I'll get a snack at the reteraw, an' you ken have the whole house ter youseffs. An' mine an' tell Sealy thes ter hump herseff on the dinner. Come now, hunny, don't look so sorry. You mussent mine me ; no you mussent. Hit 'ill come right in the eend, yer see if hit don't. How d'ye like the Jedge, anyhow ? He's a jolly ole coon, hain't 'e ?" divertingly.

"He was very kind to me, and I shall love him always."

"In course yer will, an' you'll love David too, arter awhile, an' he'll love you, an' we'll all like one anuther, an' we'll all be thes as happy as a passel ov dead pigs in the sunshine. So run now, hunny, an' wash yer face an' git all them tears clean away, an look thes as bright az a big sunflower when the tippy-bob comes. I thes know's she'll 'spect ter see a tackey an I wants yer ter 'sprize her like you 'sprized the Jedge, thes now. Thar's nothin' in the world to take the starch outen a feller, or the conceit

outen a girl like a 'sprize at fust sight. Hit thes knocks the socks offen 'em at once, an' 'specially the female 'umman. Ef ole Paul hadn't a been struck bline with 'sprize at the fust pop, he wouldn't a never knowed what hit 'im ; 'so now, sweety, I'll git off afore they comes. Thar—thar, brighten up," soothingly kissing her. "You mus-sent cry. You'll spile all the purty," and with the moisture almost blinding his own eyes, he tenderly kissed her again, once more, and hurried away, to keep from breaking down utterly, while she, with a brave effort to be strong, went up to her dressing-room, to wash away all traces of tears she was so powerless to keep back.

Surely, she could not know how sweetly those unasked-for pearls glorified the beauty of her face, or she would not have hurried away, in such haste, to wash them off before any one might come to see them.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS WINSTON MUCH AGAINST HER WILL, CALLS
UPON HER NEW SISTER-IN-LAW.

JUDGE WINSTON found his daughter in an unamiable mood. She had wept off the hysteria of mortified pride, and was now sunk in an aftermath of morose and sullen anger. The traces of weeping were still on her cheeks, for she had been too callous in her humiliation to even care to remove them. Her father noted the abandon of misery, and somehow it irritated him. He felt it a reproach to the gentle girl whom he had just left, and whom he felt had been already too grossly insulted.

"Are you ill?" he curtly asked, and the unconscious acerbity of tone resented the slight that had been put upon the other.

"I am not ill—only heart-sick and disgusted. I was only wishing that I was Brother David, that I might go out like another Judas and hang myself," she answered, with a quick erection of the pretty head.

“When your brother David comes to know what a sweet woman God has given him for a wife, he will deserve to be hanged as an ingrate if he does not love her as his life.”

“Sweet woman, indeed ! Forty thousand times her fortune could not make the woman sweet to me, were I a man.”

“Nor will her fortune ever make her sweet to David——”

“I shall hope not,” fiercely interrupting. “I do hope he will put her away, swap her off for a mulatto, or else sell her to some other fool, as her old dog of a father sold her to him. I do hope he may never put eye upon her again. And I hope, father, that you will never let him fetch her here, for the moment she puts her foot in this house, I shall go away myself. He may degrade himself and disgrace his name, but his infamy shall never touch me. I shall have nothing to do with his baggage.”

Her father stood a moment, slightly set back by the energy of his daughter’s wrath, but the climatical epithet aroused his own, and he interrupted sternly :

“Come, this is all stuff ; you are foolish and do not know what you are talking about. Abigail is your equal in all things

that are lovely or lovable, and I am sure that she would be superior to such an indecent display of temper as this. I wished myself, to bring her home, but she has too much self-respect to come without her husband can fetch her. But I have come for you, Augusta. I must carry you to her. I wish you to see her, I wish you to know her. You cruelly misjudged her, as David misjudges her ; as I myself misjudged her ; unjustly, unkindly misjudged her. She is a sweet girl, how sweet you will have to see her yourself to know."

"But I do not wish to know her ; I never care to see her."

"But you must see her, for my sake, if not for your own. She is expecting you. I voluntarily told her that I would come for you, and you must go."

"I cannot go. I despise her and will have nothing to do with her," with an emphatic stamp of her foot.

"Then you set my wishes at defiance ?"

"You ought not to ask such an impossible thing of me."

"Then I shall not ask it. I simply command it. I have ordered the carriage ; get ready at once," he commanded sternly.

"Very well ! if you command I will have

to obey, as Sallie there would have to obey. If the carriage is ready so am I," rising up with a proud, flashing eye. "Sallie, get my bonnet and gloves; I am going to make a call."

"Lawzy mussy, Miss Gussie; hain't yer gwine ter dress? Yer hair iz all atumbled up an' yer face iz thes splutched all over," protested Sallie, jealous of her mistress' pretty looks.

"Never mind my hair, nor my dress. Nobody will see me. It is only a tackey I am going to see, she will know no better. Now, sir, I am ready," pulling on her gloves.

"Very well; only, to do my duty, I should insist upon a more becoming toilet; but as you yourself will have to suffer the mortification, I will let you go."

"No mortification will ever equal the humiliation of this," she said, pluckily sticking to the last word, as she walked out to the carriage in a somewhat *passe* morning-gown.

A few minutes' drive, in silence, brought them to the gate. She had often noted and admired the outward splendor of the place, but had never known to whom it belonged, and now as they stood before the massive door, with the elaborately carved roses on

its panels telling of the splendor within, she began to shrink back into a sickening sense of her own shabbiness.

“I—I—hardly expected such a place as this or I—I—should have dressed,” she stammeringly whispered, as her father raised the knocker.

“It would have been more respectful to your sister ; however, it is too late now,” he answered, giving the knocker a vigorous pull.

Sam opened the door, but the young mistress, herself, stood ready to greet them.

Poor Augusta ! if the inanimate splendor of the place had so overcome her obstinate indifference, what must have been the overwhelming effect when she looked up to find herself in the presence of the fairest, queenliest, loveliest lady she had ever before seen in all her life !

For a moment she stood, in an admiring daze, forgetting, in the radiant presence of the lady, the almost slatternly appearance of her own. It was not until her father spoke that she was recalled to a sense of the situation, and then she wished for the floor to open that she might drop through and be hidden from sight.

“This is my daughter ; Augusta, this is

your sister Abigail. I wish so much for you two to know each other."

"If Miss Winston will let me, I shall be glad to know her," answered Abigail, a little uncertain of her advance. She had a dim suspicion that, much against her will, the young lady had been forced into the association; the *negligee* dress had told its story. No young lady would venture in the presence of one whom she cared for, or even respected, arrayed in such slovenly attire.

The voice, though, was low and sweet, and there was a wistfulness in the look that accompanied it, that helped to reassure the abashed young lady, and clasping the hand her father had joined in hers she answered:

"I think that I shall be glad to know you, too," and then with another glance at the refined elegance of everything around, she added: "But you must excuse me now. I only called at the hurried insistence of my father and am hardly presentable."

"Ah, but you must dine with us. I am quite alone, there is no one but your father. I can readily excuse the hurry of your toilet."

"You are very good, but I cannot excuse it myself. I really must go. I—I may come back."

"Oh, will you?"

"Yes. It will not detain me long. Father, will you go with me, or shall I excuse you here?"

"I will go with you. Your sister will excuse us. I am afraid, my dear, that you will think us a very eccentric set?" turning to the young lady with an apologetic smile.

"Oh, no, I think that I understand," a little sadly.

"Yes, I am quite sure that you do. But by-bye, we will be back within a half hour."

"Oh, father, why did you not tell me?" cried Augusta, as the carriage drove rapidly away.

"I tried to tell you but you would not listen."

"Yes, but you should have compelled me. I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Nor did I before to-day."

"But you told me the other day that she was ugly; a fright; snub-nosed, freckled-faced and waddled like a duck."

"I was sadly mistaken. I had really never seen her before to-day when she came in, so shyly clinging to your brother's arm, the most radiant vision of womanly loveli-

ness my eyes ever rested upon. I was astounded myself. It was some one else I had seen and mistaken for her."

"I was never so ashamed of myself before in all my life. I did wish the walls to fall in upon me to hide my shame. I shall never do such an unwomanly thing again as long as I live. Even Sallie knew better. Does Brother Dave know? Has he really seen her?"

"I fear he does not know. She looked very sweet and conducted herself admirably; indeed few women could have carried themselves as she did; but I fear the poor boy was too much blinded by prejudice, willfully blinded, to see. He was not gracious, he was almost boorish and I fear hurt her. He was positively rude, and she is not without feeling. She is a girl of the tenderest sensibilities. She has good sense, however, with it, and a superb courage, and may be able to despise what would otherwise offend. Do you know that is now my greatest fear, that she may come to despise David, for his unreasonable prejudice. What a retribution upon our family pride would that be? She, the despised daughter of the *parvenu*, looking in scorn upon the scion of my house. But I trust to her sweetness to

save our family from such a humiliation. I am sure that she is as good as she is beautiful."

"And her name is Abigail? What a horrid name!"

"I think it a very sweet one. David and Abigail! What a happy coincidence, is it not?"

"I never heard of it before."

"Oh, Augusta! Never heard the scriptural story of King David and of Abigail his wife?"

"Yes, of course I have heard of King David, but I thought that it was Uriah who was his wife. But I don't care, the names are simply horrible. I don't see why parents impose such ugly names upon their helpless babies."

"David was named for your grandfather, your mother's father. It was a very dear name to her and I named our first-born for him," a little penitently.

"Oh, David will do well enough for a boy, or a man. It doesn't matter so much for them, but for a girl! Abigail! It is shocking and shows the low taste of her parents."

"She has another name; the name her mother gave her. It is Grace."

“Ah ! that is better ; that is really pretty, and so much more in keeping with her looks. She is wondrously pretty and seems almost Grace itself. Why not call her Grace ?”

“I asked her what I should call her, and she answered Abigail.”

“Ah ! she said that ? I thought better of her than that.”

“No, I think it very sweet in her ; because of its association with David.”

“And are they really married ? It doesn't seem true.”

“Yes, they are really married, and a handsomer couple I never saw. My heart swelled with pride as I looked upon them.”

“And Brother Dave went right away, and left her ?”

“Yes, just as soon as he could gulp down his breakfast. In truth, one to have seen him bolting down his food would have thought that it was only for his breakfast that he came.”

“That seems hard.”

“Yes, it is hard, and I feel very much ashamed of it. We must help her to forgive it.”

“Did she seem to mind it ? I should despise a man who thought more of his breakfast than of me. If Walter can think of

eating for a week after we are married, I shall give him my opinion of a glutton."

"Yes, of course she minds it; his going away so soon, I mean; his eating was all right enough, and I could notice a little wifely pleasure flushing her cheeks as she herself poured his coffee. It was his ungracious manner of leaving that hurt her. But she was too sweet and brave to let any one know. I could only see it in her eyes."

"But why did she marry him, a man she never saw, and a man who cares nothing about her?"

"Ah! why did she? Why does any one marry? Why did I marry your mother?"

"But you must have loved my mother?"

"Ah, yes! but how came it about? How happened it that we first met? Ah! there are mysteries, my daughter, that we may not understand. It was written in the book of their lives that they were to marry, and if David will only prove himself worthy of Abigail, I am sure that he will always bless the Providence that gave him such a wife. But here we are at home. Hurry up to your room and dress in a minute; we must not keep her waiting; we have already lost an hour. The clocks are striking two, now.

Robert, keep the carriage waiting ; we are to drive back directly," turning to the coachman, as he handed his daughter from the carriage.

"Ah ! this is so much better ; so much more becoming to yourself and to your station, than the dress you wore before," he cried as, after a hurried toilet, his daughter reappeared, arrayed in faultless dinner-dress.

"I am truly sorry that I did not know before," she said springing into the carriage, and in a few minutes they were again at the Hardie mansion.

This time there was no uneasy slipping away of self-sufficiency, but rather a buoyancy of spirits as she again stood before the door, and there was no abashed shrinking aside when the queenly young mistress again came forward to meet her. With a little pause to wonder for an instant at the beauty of the eyes, Augusta Winston put out her arms and took her newly-made sister to her heart, only softly murmuring as she kissed her :

"My sweet sister."

After that there was no need of ceremony, explanation, or apology between them, that sisterly kiss, so artless in affection, sufficed

for all that had passed and for all that was to come.

With an arm affectionately linked in the arm of each, the young mistress conducted her honored guests into the parlor, where another perplexing amaze filled the looks of the young lady, as she glanced around upon the princely elegance of the room.

The little heart-shaped dais, with its rich carpet of purple velvet, was still there, and the snowy bell, now redolent with its mellowing roses, hung in its place.

The unexpected sight of this suggested a new wonder to the admiring eyes of the young lady, and she turned inquiringly :

“But I thought the wedding had been a private one?”

“Oh, no!” cut in her father, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. “There were a hundred admiring eyes to see. The room was quite full, and I very much doubt if a more loyal concourse of friends ever before gave earnest of good wishes to a bride more beloved.”

“Indeed! And who were your attendants?” turning to the bride.

“Nanny, there,” pointing to her grinning maid, “was kind enough to attend me.”

“Oh!”

“Yes, and solemn as was the moment, and much as I felt like crying, it was ‘really too ludicrous to see and hear her as she ushered your brother into my room. ‘Here, Miss Grace, I’ve fotched ’im,’ she cried, making one of the most comical little courtesies imaginable. I could hardly keep from laughing. I wonder if he was too sadly distraught to notice it? Heigh-ho!” and despite all her bravery, a little sigh had to slip out.

“Ah! I wish that I had known. I ought to have come. But were there no others who could have done that little for you?”

“Oh, no! save your father and mine there were no others present, except the negroes. It was to the negroes your father referred when he spoke of ‘admiring eyes’;” she smilingly answered. “The home negroes, wished to see me married and I could not refuse the good creatures,” she further explained, seeing a little curl to the young lady’s upper lip.

“And I am glad that they were present,” said her father, in defiance of the little curl to the aristocratic lip. “They showed by their simple demonstrations of affection what a gentle mistress you are to them. No ‘epithalamium sung by a crowned muse,’ could have spoken your praises more

eloquently than did their artless words of endearment. It was a scene that I should like to see painted."

"It touched me, and my heart had to bless them," Abigail answered.

"You must not mind my looking, I have all the young lady's proverbial curiosity about such things. Will you show me?" asked Augusta, rising, and stepping to the dais and standing under the roses.

"I am glad that it interests you, and I will show you. Your father will excuse us, or will you look in the library, sir? Nanny can show you, and I must tell you, my father charged me to make his excuses to you: he will be detained at the bank all the afternoon, and we must not expect him."

"Oh! yes, certainly!" and in spite of his better nature, there was a *soupcon* of relief in his feelings at the announcement. "And I can gladly excuse you two girls," he added brightly, "for a little while, however, a very little while, until you can gratify Augusta's curiosity. I see she is just dying by inches to know all about it. What a pity we didn't have a Jenkins on hand to write it all down," he laughed, nodding back, as he followed the lead of Nanny to the library.

"And now," said Abigail, turning to

Augusta, "I will show you; there across the corridor is my little drawing room, it opens into my boudoir and through it into my chamber, and it was in there that I was hidden——"

"All by yourself?"

"Yes, all by myself, like a criminal in his cell awaiting the executioner——"

"Were you not frightened?"

"I was fluttered. I—I—but I had best not tell you."

"Oh, yes! tell me, you must not mind telling me anything. I feel already as if I had known you always. I am sure I shall tell you all my secrets, all about Walter. Do you know that I am going to be—be—married too?" with a rosy blush half of pride and half of shame.

"Ah! I hope you may be happy."

"Oh, yes! thank you! but now I have told you all my secret, you must tell me yours. Tell on. What was it you were afraid to tell?"

"Well, I will tell; I was not quite—quite certain that he would come——"

"Oh! that was sad," interrupting with a little cry.

"Yes, it was sad; and sadder still, I hardly knew whether to wish him to come, or to

wish him to stay away. But at last he came; Nanny 'fotched him.' ”

“That was funny,” another interruption, with a little laugh.

“Yes, and he forgot to take of his riding-gloves, but offered me his hand still gloved. I hardly knew what to do, but he soon recovered his wits, and pulled them off and threw them on the floor as if they had been contaminated, and then, without intending it, I am sure, he seized my hand with such a grip as to almost make me scream with pain. We came across the corridor there, and entered the door here, and we stood here, at the apex of the heart, and Dr. Davenport stood there, between the lobes, and we knelt under the roses, and I—I—I was very happy, for I do, oh, yes, I do love him,” and despite herself the young lady had to break down and go to crying. But the tears were very sweet, and only caused her newly-found sister to slip her arm around her waist and cuddle her head against her shoulder, as she soothingly whispered :

“And I am sure that brother David will love you too, for he is one of the dearest and best and kindest brothers in all the world; and I—I shall always love you for loving him. And now you must give me one

of these buds," tiptoeing up to reach a rose.

"As many as you may wish. Here, I believe I am taller than you. See, I can easily reach them, and here is a dainty cluster of Marshal Neils, they will open prettily to-morrow. I wonder if he would care to have one? I did so wish to pin one to his breast this morning, the sweetest one I could find, but he didn't have time, and I—I was afraid to bother him with roses when he had scarcely time to eat his breakfast. And do you know that I was so fluttered and confused that I utterly forgot to put him up a lunch, and he will have to drive all the way to Philippi, and make a speech without a morsel to eat. Was it not too careless in me?"

"Oh, no! He is used to it. He is so absorbed in the campaign that he hardly thinks of his dinner. He scarcely sleeps for pondering over his speeches. You should hear him. I think him perfectly splendid."

"Oh, yes; I have heard him. I heard him at the City Hall the other evening. Oh! I was very proud of him then, even before he had ever thought of poor stupid me. But now let us go to your father; it

will be dinner soon ; or, let me show you to your room : will you have one of my rooms ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! ”

“ Then Betty shall wait upon you. You will find her a good girl. Nanny, send Betty up to the lilac room,” and linking her arm in the other’s, she led her away to be installed at home, and then turning her over to the obsequious care of the grinning Betty, she hurried down to the library to look after her father-in-law, just as Sam came in to announce dinner.

There were only two guests with the bride at the wedding feast, but the table would have sufficed for a hundred.

“ Magnificent ! baronial in its sumptuousness ! ” commented the Judge, himself no mean epicure.

“ How pretty, how dainty, how exquisite and nice ! ” cried Augusta.

“ Oh, if he only had a portion ! ” sighed the bride.

But alas ! He for whom the fair bride was so considerately sighing, albeit dinnerless, as she feared, would have scarcely relished the most tempting tid-bit of the *menu*, had it, in all its profuse bounty, been spread before him, for, at that precise moment, he

was writhing under the merciless lash of his opponent's ribald satire.

That gentleman, the Honorable Thomas Lawson, had, by some "devilish contrivance" of evil tongue, heard of the hasty marriage that morning, and further, by some unhappy chance, snatches of the disgraceful bargain had been caught by an eavesdropper, and repeated to him with appropriate embellishments, affording him a delightful opportunity to display his low wit and to gratify a rankling spite against an innocent lady at one and the same time.

With the satire of a Sheridan, he pictured a scion of the aristocracy exchanging shoes with a clodhopper; swapping his elegant pump-soled boots for an ill-fitting pair of broad-toed pegbottoms. And then, again, a proud young gentleman, the son of one of the most exclusively proud houses in the State, posing on the topmost pinnacle of social respectability, and then tumbling down; to be caught at the bottom in the ready arms of a *parvenu's* daughter:

"Oh, what a luckless fall was there, my countrymen! But not altogether luckless, for be it known, that though unmistakably pegbottom, the girl is prunella vamps and morocco quarters, with silver tassels and

golden buckles. She weighs two hundred and fifty pounds, not counting chignon and ear-bobs, at least ten pounds more, and we are reliably told that for every pound of 'gal' he gets a pound of gold, with a 'nigger' or two 'flung in,' a pretty fair price, I should say, for a son-in-law; more, in fact, than he is worth, and for once in his life, Ole Money-bags has been cheated at his own game. But what a spectacle! Capitolian society dancing a german with pump-soles on one foot and pegbottoms on the other! A gander with gaffs on could not be more edifying."

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMMON GRIEVANCE MAKES THEM CLOSE OF KIN.

THE appointment for the next day was at Grafton, the county seat of an adjoining county. The canvass was made by the old-fashioned methods of stump-speaking in joint discussion.

The candidates traveled the same circuit, and when they first started out they

traveled together, but as the campaign progressed and the discussions became more heated, its personalities day by day more bitter, pointed and exasperating, they soon fell apart, separating upon the adjournment of one meeting, only to see each other at the next, each traveling his own gait and his own road, without friendly speech or even recognition.

Up to that day at Philippi, they had maintained a polite mansuetude toward each other, but the uncalled-for, far-fetched and grossly unjust allusions to his marriage, and the obese charms of his wife, as false as they were gross, had completely destroyed what little had been left of the *entente cordiale* between them, and now, instead of coldly polite civilities, nothing was exchanged between them save angry glances and scowls of hatred and scorn.

The programme for speaking, as were the appointments themselves, had been made by the executive committees of the respective parties. The speakers were to alternate in opening and in closing. Lawson had opened and closed at Philippi. It was Winston's turn to-day at Grafton. An unusually large audience had gathered in the court-house, for the fame of the speakers

was spreading and the party spirit was running high.

A friend of each party occupied the stand, and all was presided over by Judge Crisp, a political friend of one and a warm personal friend of the other.

Time was called at 12:30, when Col. Black in an effusive but taking flourish introduced: "The gallant standard-bearer of the great unterrified, old-fashioned, flat-footed, square-toed, peg-bottomed Democracy; the Honorable David R. Winston, who will now address you."

The young orator arose, and after waiting a moment for the storm of applause that greeted him to subside, commenced his speech by a personal reference:

"I am aware, my friends, and fellow-citizens," he said, and they wondered a little at the hardness of his voice, "that it is in bad taste as well as in bad spirit, for a speaker to inject in the discussion of questions purely political, matters which appertain to his own individual self, and with which the public can have no possible concern. I grant, that when a man is personally unclean, when his private life is such as to unfit him for a public trust; when his domestic relations are offensive to public

morality and obnoxious to the peace, the purity and the well-ordering of society, that when such a man, in defiance of all shame, and defiant of public opinion, puts himself before the people as a candidate for their suffrages, he, with his character, as well as his domestic irregularities, becomes a legitimate subject for public arraignment, for public comment, and for public condemnation. But if a man be not these; if there be no taint of moral leprosy in his life, no stain upon his honor, no reproach upon his family, then his private life should be untouched, his home should be sacred, his wife should be respected, and none but a lying tongue, inspired by a heart as rotten and as cowardly as hell itself, would dare speak aught against it. I am thus emphatic, my friends, because I wish to give point and forcible direction to the proposition. It may not concern you to know that I am a married man. I cannot conceive why it should, unless the fact of my being such may fit or unfit me for serving you in a public capacity. Unless celibacy be a political virtue, I cannot see what interest the public can have in the fact of my marriage, or why the personal appearance or avoirdupois of my wife should be made a feature in this canvass.

But it seems that it is to be. Yesterday morning I was united in marriage to a lady, not perhaps up to the gentleman's aristocratic standard of social worth, but at least of unquestioned and unquestionable repute, and the announcement was not yet made to my friends when my, I will not say honorable opponent," casting a glance of withering scorn in the white face of Lawson, "was quick to seize upon the circumstance as a proper subject for the display of his gross spleen and ribald wit——"

Here Lawson interrupted : "I called no names, sir, I only instanced a circumstance to illustrate a point," he said with a shabby grace.

"No ; you called no names, because your courage was not equal to your malignant spleen. The malice that winged the shaft, lacked the manliness to direct its aim ; but it needed no names ; the brutal and asinine applause of your friends told very plainly how well it was understood. But had it not been, had the prurient stupidity of the beasts failed to comprehend your indecent innuendo, this filthy sheet here," holding up a newspaper, still wet from the press, "this cuspidor of his political brothel, in which the slime and slush and dregs of the drunken

revel are caught, to be dished out again to the moral swine that fattens upon such swill, would have told to whom, and to what the cowardly allusion was made. This editor, whom I see grinning before me, miserable lickspittle as he is, yet more courageous than the wretch who inspired him, after displaying in bold-faced type, as a tempting bill of fare, the ribald mouthing, has the boldness to fix it directly upon me and mine. This is what he says, and I must crave your pardon for reading such rot: 'The announcement in another column of the marriage of the aristocratic Mr. David R. Winston, son of Judge Winston, to Miss Hardie, the buxom daughter of old Israel Hardie, a genuine pegbottom, from Hurricane Creek, gives intelligent point to the witty remarks made yesterday, in his speech at Philippi, by Hon. Thomas B. Lawson as reported above. The point can be better appreciated when it is known that the conditions of the marriage settlement were precisely as he stated. The aristocratic, but impecunious groom, was to receive, as a *quid pro quo* for his social position, with the hand of his bride, a pound of gold for every pound of girl, with a negro "flung in" with every pound of each. This mercenary bar-

gain, so revolting to the sanctity of the marriage compact, was made in the office of Mr. Winston, between the woman's father and the Judge's son, and was witnessed by the Judge himself. The shameful dicker was overheard by more than one listener, and its truth, incredible as it may seem, can be established beyond cavil. *Vive les pegbotoms* ; they are coming to the front.'

"Now, my friends, it is not for myself that I notice this scurrilous effusion, but in behalf of the lady, an inoffensive and unoffending lady, against the fair mirror of whose pure womanhood not even a whisper of scandal has ever been breathed, and whose only offense is that she is the daughter of a man who was once poor, but is now rich, a man who started life at the plow, a poor unlettered boy, and who, by industry, economy and good judgment has been fortunate enough to acquire wealth ; not dishonestly, mind you, no insinuation has been made against his probity, it is only that he is rich, or rather that he was once poor. I repeat, that it is in behalf of this lady, who is in nowise responsible for my candidacy, I put the gentleman and his friends and tools, upon notice, that any further reference to her, or to her worthy father, during this can-

vass, shall be accepted by me as a mortal affront to be wiped out by the heart's blood of the dastardly miscreant who dares to make it. And now, my fellow-citizens, begging your pardon for this reference to a matter so *aliunde* to the issues of the canvass, and which is as painful to myself as it must be nauseating to you, I shall address myself to the more pertinent questions of the campaign."

And with a rare eloquence, even in those brave old days of brilliant oratory, he plunged into the subject and made one of the most telling speeches of the campaign.

Lawson followed, but made no allusion to the subject of marriage. The tightly compressed lips and steel-cold glance of the young man as he uttered the final words of warning told him that it would indeed be death to one of them for him to do so. He saw, too, the mistake that he had made. That the marriage of the young aristocrat with one of the "pegbottoms," instead of being a reproach to his prospects, was likely to turn out a happy political stroke, as it established a kind of kinship with that ilk, and the "pegbottoms" were the real sovereigns.

But, while the speakers were silent on the matter, the newspapers took it up and rang its changes *usque ad nauseam*.

And it was through this medium of cold, leaden type, that the young wife first came to hear of it. Her interest in the canvass, always alert, but now doubly so, made her scan, with hungry eyes, every line that fell under them, and when, two days later, the weekly "Democratic Clarion," the political *vade mecum* of her father's faith, was brought in and under the double-scored heading of : "An Outrage Against Decency," she read ; first, the editor's indignant scorn and scathing protest against the outrage, and then the extract from the "Grafton Whig," containing a *verbatim* report of the cruel tirade ; the announcement of the marriage, with the editor's beastly comments, and then the "Clarion's" report of her husband's reply, she could hardly restrain the wrath that filled her soul and fired every fiber of her being. No hysterical sobs of shame and of mortified pride moved her, but a flash of livid anger, clinching her fists and stamping her feet in a frenzy of outraged womanhood.

"Why, hunny ! what in the world's the matter with you ? Your eyes flash thest

like litening," asked her father, in a little consternation at the cyclonic indications.

"Have you read this?"

"Eh, no! In course not; I allers gin you the paper fust. What is it? Has Lawson bin a woollin' David? I 'spects so. Thest read it ter me, Abby, my eyesight hain't so very good this mornin'."

"Yes, I will read it," and in a voice fairly tragic in its wrath, she read it all.

"Well! well! well! mussy me! mussy me! Who'd a thought hit of Lawson? But I ruther think as David sorter got 'im on the home-stretch. Don't you?" brightening up a little at the consoling thought.

"The man is a beast for mischief; a base, bad man," she cried fiercely. "And he is a congressman! and expects to be elected again. Is it of such miserable stuff that our statesmen are made?" she asked in scorn.

"Some on 'em is. Some on 'em are made ov monstus pore stuff, I tells you. An' is mighty slack-twisted at that."

"It is infamous, the beast!"

"Yes, an' thest ter think, Abby, that the onnerry cuss had the brass ter come a pea-vining around you, last year, hisseff; I am glad that you sot down on 'im, Abby, dinged if I hain't."

"Please don't speak of it," with an angry stamp of her pretty foot.

"Thar, now ! you've busted your slipper. You mussent get so mad, hunny, the raskill hain't worth it. I wouldn't spile my shoe with such as he am. I wouldn't even wipe my shoe on 'im if I waz you."

"I could grind my heel on his forehead. I could stamp his vile, slanderous serpent-tongue out," making a pirouette upon an imaginary head.

"An' git your heel all stone-bruised for your trubble. No, hunny, that wouldn't pay. You must cool down, sich tantrums hain't purty, you don't look your natcherell seff at all. You's too sweet a gurrill ter be soured by sich a toad. You thest let 'im alone an' David 'ill fix 'im. Do yer see as David has got his brissels up, an' you may thest bet yer bottom dollar that he'll fetch 'im ter taw."

"And to think that he should try to hurt him through me?"

"Yes, hit was mean, but then hit is natcherall. Bizness is bizness, you know, and them pollyticioners thest takes all the underholt thay kin git. They don't mine lying a bit."

"But he will not lie, I know. He would

scorn to do a mean thing," she loyally protested.

"Yes, I thinks myseff that David is plum' square. But, Abby, tell me, what is a shenon, anyhow. Is it very bad?" lowering his voice to a confidential whisper.

"A chignon is a horrid bunch of false hair, that some ladies wear as their own. You know that I never wore such a thing in my life?"

"I should say not, seein' as how you have more already than I would like to tote. An' so that was all the 'bominal fool meant ter say by shenon. I was effeered hit was something bad that he was a trying ter fling up ter you. If that waz all, Abby, I don't know as if I waz you as I would care for hit at all. . Hit can't hurt you."

"No, it cannot hurt me, but oh ! how it must have hurt him !"

"Hit will hurt 'im afore David gits through with 'im."

"But it was him, David, I meant."

"Eh ! was it ? Well, yes, no hit will not hurt David, nuther, fer I tells you what's a fac' : the pegbottoms is a gwine ter take this thing up, yer mine me if thay hain't. Thay is monstus touchy, the pegbottoms, is, you thes see zif they don't put David square in.

Yer see, Abby, the most ov we-uns is peg-bottoms, an' when the pumpsles begin ter step on our toes then we thes begin ter kick. Did you see how slick David turned the joke on 'im? thar whar he sez that 'bout the pore boy plowin'. I wish he'd a sed as I waz a plowin' a bull-yearlin'; that would a took. Thar's nothing like plowin' a bull-yearlin' ter start a man ter congress on. Hit thes made Joe Brown guv'nor ov Gorgy. Read that again, Abby; that's monstus good read-in', an' I loves ter hear hit." -

The irate young lady read the paragraph again, and had her anger allowed her to confess it, she felt a little pride herself in the honest tribute so frankly paid to the sterling worth of her father.

"That's bully, an' I'll thes bet you the finest thoroughbred mare in Kaintucky that hit thes lays the wax on Tom Lawson. David is 'lected, thes as shore az falling off a log. An' what iz that he sez 'bout you, Abby? Sumthin' 'bout the lookin'-glass?"

"Oh, yes! I will read it: 'Now, my friends it is not for myself that I notice this, but in behalf of the lady, an inoffensive and unoffending lady, against the fair mirror of whose womanhood no whisper, even of slander has ever been breathed, and whose

only sin is that her father was once poor and now is rich.' ”

“ Yes ; I sees now, an' hits mighty nice, Abby. I thinks as how you orter be monstus proud ov David ; monstus proud ! ”

“ Oh ! I am proud of him, and shall always bless him for his brave, manly words spoken for me ; for me and for you, father ! Ah ! here comes Augusta ; I wonder if she has seen this ! ” as the door opened and Nanny ushered that young lady in.

“ Yes, in course she has ; don't ye see she's blowed up, fit ter pop ? Here ; lem-me slip out ; I never could stand a 'umman in the tantrums, an' I thes sees the ole Nick in ther way her bonnit sets ! I'll go an' talk ter the Jedge an' see what he sez about hit.” And without waiting for his hat, the old gentleman dashed through the rear door, just in time to escape the explosion that came popping from the surcharged lips of the indignant young lady.

“ Oh ! Grace, Grace ! I have come to tell you ; I am just too mad for anything, and I couldn't stand it any longer. Here ! have you seen this nasty thing ? ”

“ In the *Clarion*, you mean ? ”

“ Yes ; that miserable stuff ! Oh ! the mean wretch ! I could positively claw him.

Oh ! if I was only a man ! How I do wish I was a man ; I would call the beast out and shoot him like a dog. I am ashamed of brother Dave that he hasn't done it. I would have shot him on the spot. Don't it make you sick to think of it ?”

“ Yes ; I was very angry at first, and, I fear, made an exhibition of myself. See here ; I have stamped my slipper into tatters. It is hopelessly ruined,” putting out her foot and displaying the demoralized slipper. “ Here, Nanny ; take it away and bring my boots. And now, Augusta ; have a seat ; let us sit down and talk it all over and try not to mind it so much. Of course it was contemptible and mean, and I do know that it sorely wounded your brother. Ah ! that the wretch should try to wound him, through me ; I who would of have cut my right arm to have shielded him from any hurt ; it is too bad, too bad !” and if the demolished slipper had not been safe in the caressing hand of Nanny, who was vainly trying to smooth it into shape again, it would have suffered another martyrdom, for, in spite of her philosophical purpose to sit down and talk it all over without minding it, the thought of the hurt put upon him, the man whom her tender fancy had already apotheosized into a

divinity, filling her life with its completeness of adoration, becoming not only its lord and master but its idol as well, was so outrageous that the loyal blood had to boil over again, and the sympathetic feet had to fairly dance in impotent rage. Next to the frantic capers of an angry child there is nothing so charmingly vigorous as the sudden wrath of a pretty woman.

Miss Winston, already surcharged, began to pop, too; the explosions coming out in little sparks and flashes.

"I wis—wis—wish we—we ha-had him here; we would make—make Jake hold him, an—and I—I—I would cow—cowhi—hide him; wouldn't you?"

"It was so mean in him to try to wound him," said Abigail, a little timidly, as if some apology was needed for the unseemliness of their tempers.

"To wound him? No, darling, it was you he struck; the cowardly whelp, to strike a woman! Why should he wish to hurt you?"

"Oh, no, not me! it was him he tried to kill. He could not hurt me; it was only him."

"But he cannot hurt brother David; everybody knows that he is incapable of doing a mean thing."

“Yes, I know ; but perhaps the wretch thought that he loved me, and that by ridiculing me he could hurt him. But wasn’t it ridiculous, though, the idea of me weighing two hundred and fifty pounds and wearing ear-bobs and a chignon ! How could he ever think of such an absurd thing ?”

“Oh, because his own wife wears them, I’ll be bound. And besides, the wretch is mean enough for anything. But, did he ever see you ?”

“One should imagine not, from the description he gives of me ; but for all that, he has seen me.”

“Ah ! And could he condescend to waste a glance on you ?”

“It was a condescension, to be sure ; but he was gracious enough to make it. And, Augusta, I ought not to tell it, but to show you the full depth of the creature’s meanness, I will tell you ; only, Augusta, you must first promise me that you will never, never breathe a single syllable of it to mortal ear, not even to your brother’s. Will you promise ?”

“Yes, I promise. Do tell me.”

“Upon your life ?”

“Yes, upon my life. I won’t even tell Walter.”

“Then, would you believe it? This man, who now speaks so cruelly of me, once—once, only last year, a few weeks before he married the Widow Tuppin, had the conceit to—to ask me—me to—to marry him——”

“Oh! Grace, Grace!” in incredulous amazement.

“Yes, it is true. I do not speak of it boastingly, for somehow I never considered it a matter to be proud of; but, on the contrary, it always brought an uneasy feeling, nearly akin to humiliation.”

“And you refused him?”

“Yes, I refused him. But I see that you are still incredulous. I am telling you the truth. I have his letter yet, asking me to be his wife. Somehow I have neglected to destroy it, or to send it back to him. Would you care to see it?”

“Oh, yes, I wish ever so much to see it; and if it is like you say, I should wish to confront him with it, that it might choke back the vile slander he has put upon you, and upon my brother.”

“No, I could not do that; but I can show it to you, only it must go no further. Come, go with me to my room and I will let you see it.” And leading the way to her

room, she unlocked her escritoire and found the letter. "Here, read it, and then we will burn it."

Augusta, with impatient curiosity, took the missive and read :

"MY DEAR MISS HARDIE: I leave for Washington, tomorrow, but before I go I must put an end to the sweet suspense with which I have been so idly dallying, by asking you to be my wife. I presume, and trust, that the attentions I have shown you may have prepared you for this declaration, and that no further probation is needed to assure you of the sincerity of my proposal. I may further hope that you will not let any exaggerated appreciation of my high position in society, nor morbid depreciation of your own status, embarrass you in your answer. What you lack in social prestige I can fully and freely make up. As my wife you may rightfully claim an entrance to the highest circles, not only in this city and State, but in the still more aristocratic court of Washington itself. I feel that you would acquit yourself worthy of either, and I should not hesitate to introduce you.

"I send this by the hand of my confidential servant, and shall impatiently expect an answer by the same trusty hand. Hoping that it may be favorable, and that I may be permitted to call this evening to receive from your own sweet lips an oral confirmation of the troth that is to make me the happiest of mortals, I subscribe myself your most faithful, true and devoted lover,

"THOMAS BOYKIN LAWSON, M. C.

"TO MISS GRACE A. HARDIE,

"240 Colbert Avenue."

"Well, well, well! Who ever heard of such a thing!" exclaimed the young lady in

amused astonishment, as she finished the amorous epistle. "And this is from the man who said such ugly things about you? But how did you answer him?"

"I was amused at the man's egotism, but I did not answer him according to his folly; I simply declined his offer."

"Egotism! Why I never before in all my life, heard of such egregious self-conceit. But what did you say?"

"I kept no copy of my answer; I only wrote a curt little note, telling him that he need not call. I fear that I forgot to even thank him for his wonderful condescension. And perhaps it was my laches in gratitude, still rankling in his mind, which provoked his savage philippic."

"And he bothered you no more?"

"Oh, no. Luckily he had another string to his bow, and was married the very next week to the wealthy widow Turpin, and I never saw him any more again until the other evening at the City Hall, when he failed to recognize me. But here, Augusta, give me the letter and let me burn it, and with its ashes let all memory of his cowardly perfidy go."

"I wish brother David could see it," reluctantly giving it up.

“Oh, no ; I should be ashamed for him ever to know.”

“But he should know, that he might hoist him with his own petard.”

“No, no. If I could, I should ask him never to notice the miserable wretch again. And I, I shall put it all away too ; only I shall never forget to love him for his brave words so gallantly spoken in my behalf, never, never, never. And now Augusta, see how easy a thing it is to make ashes of an unpleasant memory,” taking the letter and putting it in the flames, for a cheery fire of odorous sassafras blazed upon the hearth, filling the room with a delightful perfume as well as a genial warmth. Few, even of our most luxuriant epicures know the delicious fragrance of a sassafras fire. It is one of the luxuries that the pegbottoms, can only enjoy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ISSUE JOINED, PUMPSOLES VS. PEG-BOTTOMS.

“Well, Jedge, haz ye seed the *Clarion*?” asked Mr. Hardie, as he found the Judge, with a wearied look on his countenance, sitting in his office.

“Yes, and I am very sorry.”

“Yes, hit’s purty tite on me an’ Abby, but I reckon as David ’bout got even with ’im.”

“It is infamous. Has your daughter seen it?”

“Yes, an’ she’s thest as mad as an ole settin’ hen. I tell’s yer what’s a fac’, Jedge, I candly b’lieve if that feller had been a thar, he’d a got his hair pulled.”

“It is enough to outrage all her womanly feelings.”

“Yes; but she’s sorter cooled down now, an’ when she read the nice things as David sed ’bout her, she kinder hauled in her horns an’ was a fixin’ up ter cry when yer darter came in.”

"Ah, Augusta is with her, then?"

"Yes; an' she's purty ashy too; I seed hit in her eyes, an' I seed hit warn't no place fer a one-eyed man, so I thest slipped outen the back door an' thort I'd come an' talk ter you 'bout hit."

"I can only say, Mr. Hardie, that I am very sorry. It was an unmanly, ill-natured thing for Lawson to do, and I regret exceedingly that he ever did it. I cannot imagine why he should have stooped to such a contemptible thing."

"Well mebby he thinks as everything iz fair in 'lectioneerin', same as hit iz in war. An' mebby hit is too, an' we'll see zif we can't feed 'im back off 'ern the same nubbin'. An' I 'tends ter do hit too; I 'tends ter pitch in an' see that David beats the hine-sites of-fen the measly raskil, if hit takes a thousand dollars a vote ter do hit. He went an' lambasted the pegbottoms, thest fer spite, an' I'll let 'im know that the pegbottoms is able ter tote thay own skillit. I'm a pegbottom myself, I is, an' so are Abby, an' you thest bet your sickest nigger, that the pegbottoms 'ill mash sumthin' when they all stomp down tergether."

"Oh, no, Mr. Hardie, we cannot afford to

employ such a disgraceful family scandal to further our personal interest."

"Yes, but thar's no scandill 'bout hit, 'ceptin' them lies as he tole on Abby, an' they hain't so bad, now, sense Abby splained ter me 'bout the shignon, fer that's all a bare neckid lie, as David can see for hisself when he gits home. Thar hain't a single hair 'bout Abby as hain't a shore anuff hair."

"Oh, yes ; I know, and so far as you and Abigail are concerned, no possible reproach can attach. It is the damning charge of a mercenary bargain, he brings against my son, that hurts."

"Yes, but that's all a lie too, an' you knows hit."

"Alas, it has color of truth ; some infamous eavesdropper must have overheard your reference to your daughter's weight in gold, you remember the unfortunate lapse ?"

"Yes, I did say hit," quickly interrupting, "an' I sticks ter hit. I sed Abby waz worth her weight in gold, an' the man as gits her will git hit with a nigger flung in with every pound. An' I means thest perzactly what I sez ; but I doan't means by hit that I waz a buying nor a hiring your son ter take her off my han's. I wanted him fer her

bekaze I liked 'im, an' I knowed they would make a good match. An' as fer Abby, she waz willin', kaze she wanted ter please me, an' asides she waz sorter kinder stuck on 'im herseff. She had, unbeknowns't ter him, seed 'im at the speekin' an' I seed as she was a kinder hankering that way, an' that was why I come ter see you, an' see if we couldn't sorter fix up ter git them together; I hed no noshun, Jedge ov sellin' my darter, nor ov buyin' your son; you mussent think hit, sir, kaze hits a no such a thing, an' yer mussent do hit."

"No, Mr. Hardie, since I have known Abigail I can readily acquit you both of any such design; but I must be frank with you and confess that such was my first interpretation of your proposition. It was that, sir, that caused me to repel it with such scorn."

"Yes, I sees, an' I'ze afeered as David thinks that way too."

"Yes; unhappily he does, and now, I fear this miserable thing will still more embitter his mind against it."

"You must tell 'im better, Jedge. You must write ter him an' let 'im know. Hit warn't thest ter git shet ov Abby that I wanted her ter marry David. She had

plenty ov other chances. An' I'll tell ye, Jedge, on the sly like," lowering his voice into a confidential whisper, "but you mus-sent ever let Abby know a thing about it ; but this very little smarty, Tom Lawson come a pea-vinin' around her an' axed Abby ter marry him——"

"Impossible !"

"Yes, but he did fer a fac'. Hit was thest sickening ter see the way he put on his big airs around her. But, Jedge, yer orter thest seed how flat she smashed him when she sot down upon 'im——"

"Sat down upon him ?"

"Yes, mashed 'im flatener than a pancake. No wonder he thort she waide two hundred and fifty pounds."

"I do not understand ?"

"W'y kicked 'im, man. She thest ups with her foot an' sent 'im a windin'. She wouldent a wiped her shoe on 'im, I don't care zif they is pegbottoms. I was rite glad, I waz, fer I didn't like 'im at all. He allers waz a whig."

"And you tell me seriously that Lawson addressed your daughter ?"

"Courtet Abby, yer means ? Yes, that waz thest what he done, but she hed too much sense ter bother long with his sort,

an' she told him to go summers else, an' he went, an' the verry nex' week he went an' roped in the ole Widder Tuppin. An' Jedge, I tells yer what hit is, it is that what's the matter with Hanner. He's mad yit kaze she kicked 'im, an' David hez got her, an' ter pay 'em back he started them lies 'bout her waying two hundred an' fifty pounds, an' wearin' false hair. Why, the lyin' 'raskill had mout as well a 'cused her ov havin' a wooden leg, an' a glass eye. I tells yer what's a fac' Jedge, I had ter talk mity saft to her, to keep 'er fom bilein' over, fer az shore'ze yer born, that thing sticks. You may 'cuse a gurrill ov annything else, but when hit comes ter 'cusing 'em ov paintin' or stuffin' their buzzoms with cotton, or wearin' false hair, when she don't, yer thest gits yer head in a hornit's nest. He drapped his tater thar, an' I 'tends ter make the lyin' raskill wish he'd a bin borned dum afore he ever sed it."

"I think it best, Mr. Hardie, to drop the matter where it is, as quietly as possible."

"In course, I hain't a gwine ter make a big blow about hit, but I'ze thest a gwine ter move round 'mungst the pegbottoms an' if we thest don't knoc' the socks off'en the gentleman you may shoot me for a

'possum. I'm a gwine ter go over in Sain'-Clair an' buy a pare ov pegbottom shoes fer every blamed little tow-head in the county an' I'll tell 'thar mammys what's its for, an' ef they don't make it warm for ole Miss Tuppin's little man, then I don't know nuthin' 'bout 'uman nater. An' now, Jedge, I wants yer to write ter David an' tell 'im thest how it stands. I've bin a studdyin' mity serious 'bout hit fer the last night er so, an' I begins ter feel a little jubus 'bout the way things looks. 'Splain hit all ter 'im, Jedge, thest perzactly az hit iz."

"I am going myself to-morrow to join him. I am apprehensive of trouble between them, or their friends. The personal bitterness of the discussion will lead to a serious rencontre unless it is stopped. I have seen the executive committee of both parties, and they agree that all further personalities must be eliminated from the discussion. It must be stopped or they will be shooting each other's heads off. Both committees have so agreed and so instructed. And as for this unfortunate scandal, I sincerely wish, Mr. Hardie, that you will let it rest."

"As I tells yer, I don't spect ter make a blowin' horn ov it, nor to stir up a fuss, but

I'm thest a gwine ter do my level best ter beat this sneakin' raskill. I'm gwine ter show 'im that hit ain't healthy fer a two hundred and fifty-pound pegbottom ter set down on a pot-stummicked Jake like him. Humph ! the idee ov sich a gurrill as Abby wareing a passel ov tuther fokeses hair ; I tells ye, Jedge, thar's whar hit hurts."

"Yes ; but we who love her know that it is false and can afford to laugh at it. We need not care what others think. My greatest anxiety now, is for David."

"Oh, never mind David ; he'll know when he comes home an' fines out. Abby's all rite, an' don't yer go ter botherin' David 'bout her, but thest sic' 'im on the fight. What I wants is fer 'im ter wallup this Mr. Smarty. Ole Munny-bags ; humph ! I'll make 'im wish as he'd never hearn tell ov a munny-bag. You tell David ter thest draw on the Bank fer all the munny he wants, an let the ole widder Tuppin see his bline if she wants ter. An now I reckon I'd best git back home an' see if the gurrills is tore the house down. I'm jubus that they haz. I'm glad as I talked ter you, Jedge, an' be shore yer don't forgit ter tell David that I never in all my born days thought ov sich a thing as selling my darter. Good-bye ;" and with a cordial

shake of the hands the two gentlemen parted.

By sunrise the next morning Judge Winston, in a buggy behind a spanking team, was driving across the country to intercept the itinerant campaigners. The canvass, after sweeping the south, had swung around to the western part of the district, and by a hard day's driving the Judge found himself at night, within easy reach of Gosport, the appointed place of meeting for the next day.

After a nearly breakfast, he was on his way. The gathering hosts of bronze-faced, hard-handed voters, who came pouring down the hills and up the valleys, by bridle-path and carriage-road, filling the broad highway with dust and noisy confusion, as he pushed on his way, told what a lively interest these rural sovereigns felt in the coming election, and despite its humiliating reflection, it was an encouraging sign to hear the lusty slogan; "Hooray fer the pegbottoms," as group met group in the gathering stream.

It seemed that the sneering witticism of Lawson at Phillippi, had been accepted as a grave issue and instead of whiggery or democracy, high tariff or free trade, State's

rights or centralization, the one grand, all-absorbing issue upon which the fate of the universe depended was pumpsole or peg-bottom. The fastidious Judge felt a little ashamed of the connection, but for all that there was a comfortable enthusiasm in the boisterous unanimity of the pegbottom huzza.

When he arrived at the court-house he found his son busied with the county executive committee. After the introduction and exchange of friendly civilities, the matter of the canvass was resumed.

“I tell you what it is, boys ; we have got them on the hip. This thing takes like hot cakes and is spreading like wild-fire. Three days ago it was all the other way ; as I wrote you, Winston, I should have been willing to give them three hundred majority, in this county, but they only laughed at the concession ; nothing short of four hundred would satisfy them, but now the thing has turned and they are the sickest roosters you ever saw. We will carry the county, without a doubt. You see, old man Hardie was one of the pioneers of this county, and was married upon Hurricane, and he has always stuck to his people. There is not a church in the county, nor school-house

either that he did not help to build ; even the church we speak in to-day was largely paid for by him."

"Yes," spoke in another, "and last year when the frost destroyed all the wheat he sent hundreds of bushels of seed for the poor. They all know him and they will all, to a man, vote for you, whigs, though they be."

"Yes, the pegbottoms are on top and don't you forget it !" burst in another, "only listen now," turning and raising the window. "There comes the Hurricane delegation now ; all solid pegbottoms and yet Hurricane is the strongest whig beat in the county ! Listen ! 'Hurray fer the pegbottom !' Ah ! boys, we are solid. Lawson dropped his candy when he tackled the pegbottoms. Winston, you must ride him on that to-day."

"Ah, no ! I cannot do such a thing. It is too humiliating. I wish the whole thing could be wiped out," answered the young man with a flush of shame.

"Well, I don't. It's the luckiest thing that ever happened for you, and for us. It elects you most assuredly, and I think we can hold them on the county ticket."

"I think that quite likely ; but I had rather been beaten than to have had this

iron thrust in my soul ; and if you please, gentlemen, we will dismiss it. You must not expect me to employ such a reproachful argument ; to parade my own infamy as a badge of martyrdom," he answered, firmly.

"Of course you need not refer to your own connection ; but you just curry down the pegbottoms. To be sure it would be in bad taste for you to allude to your family affairs, but you can let them know what a dignity there is in labor, and what a glorious thing it is to be a free, independent, horny-handed pegbottom."

"That I shall do, and do it conscientiously as I have always done, for all my sympathies are really with the rural workers of the land, not the bread-winners only, but the bread-makers, as well ; and I think, gentlemen, without affectation, that I should be willing to exchange places with the most despised one of them all, who may hear me to-day."

"Very well ; you just do that. Sugar-coat the rural sovereign from stem to stern, and let Lawson spout as much as he pleases about the esoteric principles of constitutional law ; the ancient glories of Greece and Rome, of Hannibal and of Julius Caesar, of Cromwell and of Napoleon, these fellows

don't care a fiddler's cuss about such things ; but you just come down to 'craps' and colts, and the nice little cottage with the smoke so gracefully curling, and a fire full of yam 'taters,' then you strike a tender chord that always responds."

"Yes ! that is legitimate, and I shall use it," answered Winston, and the caucus was ended.

But while this, the democratic caucus was in such harmonious and satisfactory session, Lawson was closeted with his own committee, uneasily discussing the gravity of the situation.

"Yes ! I made a mistake," he confessed, with a grin, after the damaging effect of his laches had been laid before him, with its impending consequences. "It was a mistake ; but the infernal fools didn't understand my meaning. It wasn't at the pegbottoms, the girl and her *parvenue* father, I was striking, but at this aristocratic kid, the pumpsoled exquisite, who, for the sake of the woman's gold, stooped to marry her."

"Yes, but you ought to have known that you could not strike one without hitting the other," said one of his committee-men.

"So I see now. But what is best to be done ?"

“Well ! you’ll have to eat a little humble pie ; soft-solder the pegbottoms and apologize to the girl’s people. Smooth it over the best way possible. You know how it can be done. The Hardies are mighty strong in this county, and old Israel is immensely popular. He was born here, you know ! and there is hardly a poor man in the county who has not tasted his bounty. That is the best plan, I think ; smooth it over with the Hardies and the Sneads, and then curry the pegbottoms.”

“Yes,” added another, “if I was you I should get a pair of the coarsest-thickest soled pegbottoms that I could find and cock my feet on the stand as high as my legs would reach. We are licked like a sack if you don’t. I know fifty votes in my own beat that you have lost.”

“That is bad, and I am truly sorry,” and with this the unsatisfactory conference was ended.

It was again Winston’s turn to open the discussion, and Esquire Wheeler, the florid chairman of the democratic executive committee, introduced him with effusive gusto, the audience fairly lifting the rafters with the swell of a mighty roar, as he concluded by saying :

“He comes as a stranger to the most of us, but it is almost to his own home, and as a kinsman that he comes, for it is to the ever open hand and ready bounty of his father-in-law, that good old pegbottom, Israel Hardie, whom you all know, that we owe this very house in which we sit. Let us welcome him, then, as one of us, to the manor born.”

The young man arose, and gracefully bowing his acknowledgments, waited a few moments for the redoubled applause to cease, and then he said :

“I must thank you, my fellow-citizens, for the unmistakable cordiality of your welcome. I must thank you also for the hearty response to the reference my friend made to the name of your former fellow-citizen, Mr. Hardie,” (applause and vociferous hurrahs for the pegbottoms.) “But while sharing with you, your high appreciation of that gentleman’s worth, I must repudiate all claim to your kindness, based upon my connection with him or his family. I solicit your friendship and support upon my own merits.” (Applause and a voice : “That’s right, every tub on hits own bottom, specially if hits a pegbottom.”) “Yes, that’s the way, my friends, I prefer to stand.” (Hooray for

the pegbottoms !) And waiting again for the noise to subside, he plunged at once into his argument, warming up to his work as he went, and finally concluding with a burst of eloquence that fairly set his audience wild with enthusiasm.

Lawson followed. It was plain to be seen that he was badly hacked. With a sickly grace he began :

“ I have just received from the chairman of the congressional committee, a request that is so consonant with my own feelings, that I shall cheerfully adopt it. It is the request that in future all irrelevant personalities be eliminated from our joint discussions. As I say, the request is so much in harmony with my own inclinations, that I shall cheerfully accede to it, but before I cut myself entirely off from the privilege, I find myself constrained to make a personal explanation. A few days ago, betrayed by the acerbities of debate, and while smarting under the knout of satire, which my honorable opponent knows so well how to wield, I made an unfortunate allusion to the social standing, and to the family, of a gentleman, who, though nameless then, and who shall be nameless now, should not have been referred to at all. The remarks were made in

a spirit of pleasantry, but they were unjust to the gentleman who appropriated them, as they were unjust and discourteous to his excellent daughter. I have too high an opinion of the character of the man and of the sterling worth of the class to which he belongs, and which he so worthily represents, to have willfully aspersed the one or belittled the other ; and I beg now, to thus publicly retract every word I then said which may be construed into a reflection upon the integrity of his character, or the respectability of his daughter. This I do, my fellow-citizens, of my own volition and without the knowledge of my opponent, who so seriously regarded the little bit of badinage, as perhaps applied to himself."

And thus having eaten his little bit of humble pie, he proceeded to curry the pegbottoms in the most approved style.

But the pegbottoms were disposed to be mulish and save the racket kept up by his claqueurs, his speech was received in sullen silence.

It was not until the speaking was over, and they had had their dinner that the Judge could find a fifteen minutes, privacy with his son.

"I think, David, that I can safely con-

gratulate you upon your election. This surprising turn of affairs has done it."

"Yes, I feel very secure, and I do not know whether to laugh or to cry over it. To owe my exultation, to such an abasement! Was there ever a more tantalizing irony of fortune?"

"Yes, it is strange; but it is not upon your political prospects that you are to be congratulated. You have the sweetest woman in all the world for a wife."

"That can only humiliate me the more."

"No; she is worthy the love of any man, of the best of men."

"That puts us the further apart."

"Why should it?"

"If she is worthy a good man, I am not worthy of her. Her worth completes the measure of my own unworthiness. Father, I am very sorry, but I have quite resolved never to see her again."

"No! that would be cowardly, unmanly, cruel! It would be adding insult to injury, to strike the woman you have already wounded."

"The wound cannot be deep; her pride, or vanity rather, might possibly be hurt, but her affections can hardly be touched. She cannot be a woman of any sensibility, or she

never would have married as she did. But we need not discuss it. I am quite determined. You can take her home and keep her in countenance, if you will. To avoid the ruinous effect of a scandal, perhaps it would be best for you to do so, only it will be a grave injustice to inflict her upon my poor sister. But as for me, I must avoid her as a man should avoid a lurking temptation to commit murder. I must despise her as long as I live, or else I must despise myself."

"This is very wicked, David, and very foolish."

"Wicked it may be, but not foolish. It is the logical conclusion of a well-considered proposition. It was wicked to marry her, but the unfortunate extremity of our affairs dictated its wisdom. It may be wicked to abandon her, but my own self-respect demands it. Were there no other alternative, I should be tempted to strangle her, or else to hang myself. Is it folly to avoid such a temptation?"

"But you do not, you cannot realize all that she is. She is not what you think."

"Let her be what she may, or even more; were she an angel itself, it could not be different. The fairer she is, the fouler I must

necessarily be. That is the whole of it. Were it not that I wish to put my heel upon the neck of this fellow Lawson, the cowardly cur who insulted her, I should withdraw from the canvass, and quit the country at once and forever ; but as it is, I shall stay to triumph over his malice and in the mad whirl of politics at Washington, I shall try to forget who and what I am, leaving her free to do as she pleases without responsibility to me. Perhaps when she tires of the false position into which she has been lifted by her father's gold, she will apply for a divorce, and sinking back to her proper level she may find a man who would not have to despise himself to respect her."

"I am sorry to have to listen to such as this from you."

"I, too, am sorry to have to speak it, but such are my feelings. I would not have to endure again another five minutes of the humiliating sense of debauched manhood that I experienced that day in her presence, for a lustrum of the happiest years that can be crowded in a human life. I felt, then, how utterly impossible it would be for us two to ever be any other than strangers to each other. I hope Augusta is well ; poor sister ; I left her sadly upset."

"Augusta is well," answered his father a little coldly. "But I am taking too much of your valuable time. You should be out among the people."

"Shaking hands with my new relations," laughed David, and both, glad of the diversion, went out to mingle with the throng that still lingered in the town.

CHAPTER X.

DRIFTING APART.

THE next day at Clinton, David Winston received his mail. Crushed out of shape in the midst of a mass of political correspondence, inquiries, suggestions, instructions, committee reports,

"And other brilliant matters of the sort,"

he found a letter from his gentle sister Augusta. It was dated, and read as follows :

"HOME, October 28, 1854.

"MY DEAREST BROTHER DAVE : I suppose that you have seen the *Clarion*, with all that wretched stuff in it. Why didn't you horsewhip that cowardly fellow ?

"I have just come from Grace; I slept with her last night, and she is the sweetest girl in all the wide, wide world. I went to her as soon as I saw it; I somehow felt that we were the cause of it all, and I wanted to get down on my knees and ask her forgiveness for the insult that man had put upon her. I found her much more amiable than I could have been, had it been me and Walter the wretched dog had slandered. She had read it before I got there, and had recovered from her first hurt. Of course she was angry still, as she had the right to be, for it was a cruel thing for a sensitive girl to have to bear. But she bore it bravely; and, what is strange, she didn't seem to mind it at all for herself. It was only that she thought it would hurt you, that she cared. 'Ah,' she said, and I just wish you could have seen her as she said it; it was really tragic, 'ah, that the wretch should try to hurt him! She calls you him and he, she seems afraid to call you David, or dear, or husband, it is only him and he, and there is a world of feeling in her voice as she says it. 'Ah, that the wretch should try to wound him through me; I, who would gladly give my right arm to shield him from the least harm.' It was really pretty; Ristori herself could not have surpassed it, and I know that she meant it every word, for her eyes fairly sparkled; but then she brightened up a little when I told her no, it was her whom the wretch intended to strike, and you ought to have seen how proudly she drew herself up, and what a pretty scorn was on her lip, as she said: 'The creature's spite could never touch me.' And then, last night when we were fixing for bed, and Nanny, her girl, took down her hair, she laughed and said: 'Look here, Augusta, what do you suppose Mrs. Lawson would give for such a chignon?' and she really has the most beautiful hair I ever saw, just as fine and flossy as silk, and comes down to her knees. You know that I am proud of my own hair, but I would give the world if I only had hers. But now, Brother Dave, I must tell you all about her, for I never was so sur-

prised before in all my life as I was when I first saw her, for instead of the awkward, gawky fright I expected to see, I found her the sweetest girl I ever met in all my life. Well, you know that you left me that morning sadly in the mullygrubs (I reckon I have spelled it right, but I can't find it in the dictionary), I cried myself quite sick and was utterly miserable when father came back from the wedding and asked me to go with him to see her. I couldn't bear the idea, and positively refused to go, when he got real angry, and peremptorily commanded me to go: and I had to go, which I did just as I was, all frownsed up as you left me, only I had cried my eyes all red and bloated. But when we got there and found everything so splendidly elegant, and in the presence of such a queenly looking lady, I felt like sinking through the floor, and when I further saw that my shabbiness hurt her, I just couldn't stand it, and without going in the parlor I begged her to excuse me and I drove back home just as fast as Jake could whip up the horses, to dress and go back to her. Well, I dressed and went back, and she received me so kindly and so sweetly that my heart went out to her completely at once, and now if she was my very own flesh-and-blood twin-sister, I could not love her any better than I do,

"We stayed all day, and had a magnificent dinner, as fine as the governor gave last month, when Ida was married; and wasn't it funny? we had it all to ourselves, just we three, father, Grace and myself, when there was enough for a hundred.—You may imagine, though, what a feast the darkies had. And then she told me all about the wedding, and how frightened she was that you might not come; and showed me where you two stood under the roses; and she gave me a cluster of rose-buds from the bell—wasn't it a beautiful bell?—I want just such a one when I marry—and she wanted to pin one to your coat—the sweetest one she could find, she said—but was afraid, so I send one in this for you; you must wear it for her sake, and let her see it when you come, it will do her so

much good, for she has the nicest of feelings, and I know she loves you with all her heart, and she has a sweet and tender heart ; and oh, Brother Dave, I must ask you to forgive me for speaking so shamefully of her to you, that morning ; please forgive me, for I did not know then what a true lady and sweet girl she was. And, brother, I should like to tell you something—the most surprising thing you ever could imagine, only I promised her upon my life that I wouldn't never tell, and so I can't, but if that wretch should ever say anything more about her, you just ask him if he ever courted a certain young lady, and got ingloriously kicked. He can't deny it, for she showed me the letter itself ; and you just ought to have seen the look of supreme contempt on her face as she put it in the fire and burned it up. She don't want you ever to know, or I would tell you all about it, but I promised her that I wouldn't ever breathe it to a mortal soul, so I can't. She is somehow afraid that you might not like it, but you should not care, as she really despised the fellow's offer. It was the most conceited letter you ever read, and the next week he went and married the old Widow Turpin. No wonder he hates Grace, and hates you for marrying her. But this letter is long enough, already ; I only write in a hurry to beg your forgiveness and to send you my sisterly congratulations. I am willing to divide your love with Grace, but I don't want you to give it quite all to her.

“ Your affectionate sister,

“ AUGUSTA.

“ P.S. I must tell you, all the young men here are for you ; they have formed a PEGBOTTOM club, and are all wearing pegbottom boots. I was a little ashamed at first, but Walter says I need not mind it ; that he didn't care for it a bit, and now I do not. He has got a pair of pegbottoms, too, and says that Lawson lost his trick when he played that card, and that now he is bound to be enchred. I do hope it is so, and that you will beat him, as much for

her sake as for your own. She would think that she was the cause of your defeat, and it would kill her. Bye-bye.

“GUSSIE.

“P.S. again. But the funniest thing of all is the old gentleman, her father, buying a pair of shoes for all the pegbottom women and children in St. Clair county, and sending them to the democratic executive committee of that county to be distributed out to them.

“Walter says it is the best campaign trick he ever saw. He bought five hundred pairs, and Walter says that every pair is good for a vote, and besides the poor children need them this cold weather. I think it real good in the old man, don't you? But then he will do anything for Grace.

GUS.

“*Nota Bena*. I have begged Grace to come home with me, but she will not. I know that she wants to come though by the wistful look in her eyes when she said no. She never said why, but I know she is waiting for you to come and fetch her, so you must hurry up and get through with the election and bring her home; I do so long to kiss her welcome.

“Your loving sister,

“AUGUSTA V. WINSTON.”

It would have been a difficult psychological operation to have analyzed David Winston's feelings, as he read this letter. The warm terms of admiring approval in which his father had spoken, the day before, of her, the wife of whom he knew so little, had been taken with a large grain of salt. Being himself accessory to, if not *particeps criminis*, in the humiliating bargain, by which he bartered his manhood for sordid

gold, it was but natural, he thought, that his father should try to make the best of the dicker, by presenting the brightest side of the young lady's picture. But here, in the unaffected enthusiasm of a truthful and loving sister, he found testimony that could not be questioned. She had protested in indignant scorn against the marriage; all her womanly pride and her womanly prejudice had been arrayed against the woman he married, and now she was the first to come with pæans of praise to the beauty and grace and sweetness of the bride. His own senses, too, began to arouse in corroborative energy. Visions of her loveliness, glimpses of which he had caught even through the nigrescent cloud of disgust and loathing that had so cruelly blinded him on that unhappy morning, had been, despite his efforts to shut them out, continually floating before his inner sight, like angel flittings in a dream. Try as he might to dismiss them as distempered illusions, they would still haunt his senses, and he had to despise himself for unconsciously blessing the radiant presence. And now his sister's enthusiastic tribute to the loveliness which he had felt rather than seen strangely touched him.

For a moment he felt a lifting up of soul, a strange thrill of gladness and of pride shooting through his being, and tenderly taking the little rosebud, now withered and flattened out of all shape, but fragrant still, he unconsciously kissed it and lovingly put it away in his pocket-book, and softly he whispered her name, when in a flash, like the sharp plunge of a dagger in his heart, came the damning sense of his own unworthiness, the pitiful meanness by which he must claim a lordly possession of all this sweetness.

“My God, this is horrible !” he cried, the very reverence he began to feel for the lady exaggerating the contempt he felt for himself. “I must put this away, or it will drive me mad. How could I do such a despicable thing ! But it must be undone ; such an iniquity must not be permitted to stand. I must write to her now, before the delusion becomes a reality to her, and tell her how utterly impossible it will ever be for us two to be anything but strangers to each other. And yet—and yet—it would be very sweet for me to look in her face and tell her how much I wish I was not so wholly unfit to stand in her presence. But I cannot ; her truth would palsy my tongue with the poison of its lie.”

And then, as if indicting a renunciation of all claim and hope or expectation to a place in heaven, he wrote :

“MRS. WINSTON : My father and my sister have both told me how sadly I have misunderstood you, and with the knowledge comes the humiliating conviction of how cruelly I have wronged you. I would gladly die to undo the wrong, but as I lack the courage of Judas, the only possible atonement left for me to make is to banish myself from the heaven it would be a pollution for me to enter. You can understand what a dishonorable thing it was for me to marry you as I did, and so understanding you must know what a debasing thing it will ever be for me to stand in your presence again. Under the icy shadow of such a humiliation it would be impossible for the seeds of even a conventional affection to fructify. It would be folly, then—nay, worse than folly—it would be an additional crime against your happiness for me to attempt to plant them ; and cruel as it may seem, and painful as it is to me, I write this to absolve you from all further sense of duty or affection to me, and to ask you to put aside, as an unwomanly reproach, all further thought or interest in my being. I trust that it may not pain you to do this. I shall see to it that society must hold me entirely responsible for any scandal that may grow out of the separation by assuming for myself all blame, and by availing myself of the first occasion to proclaim to the world the innocence which is yours, and the infamy which is mine.

“If you understand me, I have written enough ; and, with a reverence I am too vile to speak, I bid you a sad farewell.

“D. R. WINSTON.”

Carefully folding the letter, he addressed it, and then, fearful that his purpose might

fail, he hurried to the village post-office and mailed it. Then he came back to his room and wrote to his sister :

“MY SWEET SISTER : Your pleasant letter is received, and my heart blesses you for the goodness that inspired it. The knowledge of Miss Hardie’s worth comes too late. Had I known her before I debauched my manhood I should have sought to win her, but now she is all too pure and good for me, and I have just written her that she may never expect to see my face again. I shall avoid her as the vampire shuns the light which guards the couch of sleeping innocence. We are too far apart in moral worth to ever be nearer in affection ; I should feel it a sacrilege on my part to venture to kiss even her finger-tips. It was a sad thing I had to write, and no one may ever know the pain it cost me to write it, but I feel that my punishment is just, and I may not complain. If it does not hurt her too much, I shall be content to bear it all.

“I have not the heart to write more now, but will write you again when I am in a better mood. I may not dictate your associations, but it may be wise for you to avoid her. The association cannot, I opine, be otherwise than embarrassing to you both. I thank you for the rose, and shall keep it always. Your loving brother,

“DAVID R. WINSTON.”

The mails, in those days, were mostly carried across the country in hacks, and were more slow in transit than they are now in this age of steam. But all slowly as they moved, they brought their sad, sad freight of disappointment and sorrow and misery all too soon to the gentle heart which leaped in

such glad expectancy as she recognized the already familiar hand in which it was addressed.

Ah ! a letter for me, and from him ; yes, it is from him and for me, all for me !” And in a flutter of maiden coyness she blushed for her eagerness, and seizing the letter she ran up to her room, that no one might see the gladness that thrilled her.

Tenderly she opened it, and tenderly she kissed the dear name, softly murmuring : “ Ah, sweetheart, sweetheart !” and then, kissing it again, she read.

Her eyes first opened with a dim surprise, and then dilated with a startled look of fear, and then they dropped, pathetic as a stricken fawn’s in mortal agony, as it all came to her what it meant.

He had indeed written enough ; she did understand, and if the crucifixion of a mortal hope could have paralyzed a human heart, her heart would have ceased to beat. All her newly-found gladness, which she had nursed into such a beautiful joy, gone like a breath ; all her new-born hopes which had so suddenly blossomed into living, breathing actualities, the sweetest, and dearest part of her own being, vanished like a midsummer morning’s dream. He, the idol of her newly-

awakened adoration, the man whom her reverential affection had apotheosized into a god, had crumbled into dust, and all that was left of the fond foolish dream was only this, a white sheet of paper, blackened and bristling with lines that glared and stung like adders.

For a moment she stood, as if mentally burying her beautiful dead, and then she gathered courage to write, for Grace Winston, Abigail no more, for David was dead to her, and Abigail must no longer be sweet. Grace Winston was a woman whose courage was as strong as her beauty was rare. Not a tremor of nerve broke the even, graceful sweep of her pen as she wrote :

“MY DEAR MR. WINSTON : I have read your letter, and I do understand. It is very sad, but thinking as you do, perhaps it is best. It was very foolish in me to build such pleasant hopes upon what my sober reason should have told me was a chimerical impossibility, and I must thank you for putting an end to them, at once and forever. I may not blame you, and I very willingly absolve you from all further interest in my life. You need not even concern yourself on my account for any scandal that may grow out of the separation. My position in society is not such as to subject my goings to that supersensitive deference to its criticisms, that one ‘to the manor born’ may be expected to feel. My womanly honor cannot be assailed, and now I am perfectly indifferent to all things else. Should you

take any steps in the matter, at all, let them be only such as will protect your own reputation, and best advance your own interest. If a legal annulment of the ceremony—I cannot call it a marriage—should suggest itself to your interest, you have my consent to institute suit, whenever, in your judgment, it is necessary. I shall interpose no defense. I return you the two letters, all that I have from you. I do not return the wedding-ring, because it was my mother's. I shall, however, discard it from my hand and put it away, where its sight may not be a reminder of the mockery it commemorates. The name you gave me, and by which you last addressed me, I suppose I will have to retain until legal steps are taken to divest me of it?

“Wishing you a happy realization of all your political hopes, and the fullest measure of success in all your undertakings, I shall ever remain,

Your sincere friend and well-wisher,

“GRACE HARDIE WINSTON.”

“And now,” she said, as she sealed and addressed it, “I must break it to father. I must not let him see that it hurts me so. Ah, poor father! he did this for him as much as for me,” and gathering all her courage she went down to her father.

His quick, loving glance detected the trouble she so bravely tried to hide, and he asked :

“Was yer letter from David?”

“Yes, it was from him; and I must tell you, father, and you must not let it trouble you, for I am quite sure that it is all for the best. He thinks that a marriage such as

ours, so mercenary, so unholy and unloving, cannot not be right in the sight of God, and—and——”

“He wants ter renig?” interrupted the old man.

“He wishes to release me,” she answered.

“I wouldn’t ’a’ thort that ov David.”

“But it is best, father. I am quite sure that it is best.”

“Well! well! meb-by hit is. An’ if it don’t hurt you, Abby, if you kin stand it I kin, only I’ze monstus sorry fer David.”

“Yes, it is hard upon him too.”

“Yes, an’ the Jedge. Hit’s mity bad. But sense I come ter think about hit, I mout a knowed hit. You kin tie a hen on a nest but yer can’t make her lay. I wonder though zif hit’s all along ’bout these tales as Lawson’s been a telling on you as makes him kick? ’Bout yer wearin’ false hair, Abby? Shorely David is got more sense than ter believe such a yarn as that! An’ asides, if yer did ware it, what would that hurt zif yer tuck it off at night. Don’t all the tippy-bobs wear ’em? an’ as fer his wife, ole Miss Tuppin, I’ll lay a coon-skin that the top ov her head iz as slick as a peeled ingern.”

Oh! it was not that, father. I think

that I understand him better than that. It was because—because—oh! I cannot explain it to you, father, as I feel it, and as I am sure he feels it. And, father, he is right, and you must not blame him so much. I am sure that if you were in his place that you would do as he has done.”

“Mebby so. I thinks as how I sees hit as it iz. David thinks thest as his daddy thort, as how I had sold you ter him; an’ that I had hired him ter marry you. An’ that’s how this hocky tale started ’bout yer waite in gold——”

“I do not understand?”

“Well, hold on a minnit an’ I will ’splain. Yer see we waz a talking in thar office, an’ some eavesdropper must ’a’ hearn us, an’ David sed as he wouldn’t marry no ’umman on God’s green yeath for her waite in gold, an’ I sez, sez I, Abby is worth her waite in gold, an’ the man as got her will git it too, with a nigger flung in with every pound——”

“Oh, father!” with a cry of pain.

“Yes, but I didn’t go ter mean that I’d give him yer waite in gold, thest ter marry you. I wouldn’t agin no man that. I thest meant as the man as was lucky enuff ter get you would git a fortin’ flung in, an’ I’d a

heap ruther that David Winston had a got you than any other chap in all creation. That's what I meant, hunny."

"I see it all now, father, and I understand. You intended it for our mutual good. and it was good in you to do it, but it has been a mistake—a sad mistake. He feels the dishonor, and it will kill us both to—to—to——"

"Try ter hide it," interrupting the stammering effort. "Well, mebby hit would. Sich things can't well be hid. The skellitin in the closet iz allers a tumlin' out an' allers a grinnin'. But, hunny," brightening up a little, "I'z glad ter see that yer don't mine hit so bad?"

"Yes, it is better now, before I had learned to love him too dearly," with the ghost of a smile.

"Yes, that's so. But, Abby, I tends ter stick ter David, tell the 'lection's over, annyhow. I thest wants him ter knock the stuffin' outen Tom Lawson."

"And I shall want you to stick to him always, father."

"I shall that, kaze I sees yer wants me to. I wonder zif I had better see the Jedge, an' see zif he's got annything to say 'bout it!"

“Oh ! no, no ! Whatever is said or done, leave it for them to do. Please do not let us interfere. Leave it all with them, father.”

“But I thinks the Jedge likes you.”

“I am very sure that he does, and for that assurance I am willing to trust him.”

“Very well, then, I’ll thest be tolled by you, Abby, seein’ as what a purty mess I’ve already made ov it. Ole fokes had better mine an’ keep thay fingers outen young folks’ pies. I’ve found that out.”

“Oh, no ! You intended it for my good, father, and I shall always bless you for your goodness. But now we will put it all away.”

“Yes, what can’t be cured must be endured, an’ we’ll thest heve ter grin an’ bear it, so :

““Molly put the kettle on,
Jinny blow the bellus strong,””

he broke out in a heroic effort to silence his disappointment in a song.

That same afternoon Augusta came. She saw at a glance in the sorrowing eye that her brother’s cruel arrow had sped home to the bleeding heart.

“I came to see if you had heard from my

brother ?" she asked, after silent kisses had been exchanged.

"Yes, I have heard."

"And have you answered ?"

"Yes, I have answered. All is over between us."

"Please tell me ?" with the tears coming up.

"I simply told him that in considering what was best to be done, he did well to put all thought of me and mine out of the question."

"Oh, why did you not hold him loyal to his duty ?"

"Because I hold his happiness dearer to my heart than I do my own. It was a sad mistake he made, and I cannot let its shadow darken all of the future of his life. Oh ! he may yet have great things before him, fame, and honor and glory, and, mayhap, at the last a life of love and of happiness, while I—I—I am only a woman. It must not matter for me. I am not known only as the despised daughter of the old *parvenu*. I can go away and no one need to care. It has been one of the most pleasing fancies of my girlhood to travel abroad ; to see some of the cities and castles and grand old cathedrals of which I had read such wonderful

stories when a child. Before this—this—sorrow came, I was preparing to go this winter; a friend—one of my school-girl friends, now married, a Mrs. Whiting of Charleston, she with her husband and sister, are going this winter, and I had arranged to go with them. Mr. Whiting is a cotton merchant and has a branch house in Liverpool, and he goes over to look after his interests there until spring, when the tour of the Continent is to be made. They sail on the second, and father says I may go with them. I have just telegraphed Mrs. Whiting that I will join them. I start this evening by the eight o'clock train. Mrs. Grundy will of course think it very naughty in me to run away and leave my husband so soon after marriage, but then nothing better could have been expected from such a *mesalliance*, and Mrs. Grundy will find in the circumstance a splendid chance to point a moral. Mrs. Grundy, you know, must have something to wonder at, and her wonder will affect me less than any other woman in the world. You must let her wonder, Augusta, only please, do not you think me utterly and hopelessly bad," and breaking down in a sob she held out her arms in a piteous appeal to the lady.

The yearning appeal was met by a sisterly clasp of arms about her neck, and between sobs and kisses she answered :

“ Oh, darling, darling ! I shall not think you anything but the dearest, best and sweetest girl in all the world, and I intend to love you as my sister always, I do not care what brother Dave may say.”

“ Oh ! ” with a jealous start, “ does he say that you must not love me ? ”

“ He is mean enough to say anything, but I do not intend to mind. I shall love you, even if I have to choose between you, darling, and him. Oh, you need not push me away. I do love you, and I intend to love you in spite of them all,” passionately clinging to her neck.

“ No, no, blood is thicker than water,” firmly putting her away. “ It would pain me to know that I stood between you and your brother. I shall soon be gone and you must learn to forget me, the sooner the better. Let me see,” reflectively, “ he told me that he would not return before the election; that is on the seventh. By then I shall be gone; out upon the ocean, and far, far away, and he need not ever think of, or care for, or hear from me again any more. And now, darling, your love has been very sweet to me

and I shall always bless you for it, but I must give it up. Since he does not wish it, I will put it away too. And now, darling, let us say good-bye. I shall be too weak to speak it at all unless I say it now. Good-bye, darling, good-bye," and with a passionate kiss she strained her to her heart and then pushing her aside she turned, and running to her room she locked herself in. .

Augusta looked after her a moment, and then she too turned sorrowfully away.

The speaking had closed for the day at Spring Garden, and the speakers had retired to their hotels when Winston's mail was handed him. Scarcely expecting to hear, and certainly not so soon, from his wife, the sight of her letter^d stirred him with a little wonder. Quickly dropping all others he opened, and with something of the feelings of a convicted felon reading his own death-warrant he read it.

"Ah!" he murmured as he finished, "I wonder if Lucifer, looking up into the heaven from which he had fallen could have felt half the remorse that unmans me now? Oh! why could I not have known her before! Alas, alas, all of light, of life, and of love gone; what have I to hope for now! Ah me, she returns me my letters that I need

not ever fear that they may be used against me. What a thoughtful goodness ! But then she is altogether good. And she takes off the wedding-ring. Oh, bless the ring ! I would freely give my right hand for that poor little ring. O God ! if it be not a blasphemy for such a wretch as I to ask a blessing upon her, bless her ! do Thou, O God, bless her ! Bless her and keep her alway !” and feeling better for the prayer, he read the letter again : ““My womanly honor cannot be assailed ;’ Ah, sweet ! and the man, or the woman either, who dares to breathe aught against thy womanly propriety—thy womanly goodness or thy womanly sweetness shall eat the vile slander at the butt of my horsewhip.”

CHAPTER XI.

PAYING FOR THEIR WHISTLES.

THE campaign had ended, the discussions had closed, the election was over, and in the grateful relaxation that followed the strained and drunken excitement of the canvass, the candidates were feverishly awaiting the

result. The returns came in slowly ; less time is required now to know the result of a Bulgarian Plebiscite, than it took then to hear from the outlying precincts of a congressional district. Only a few counties had been heard from, but these few gave unmistakable forecast of the final result. There could be no question of the triumphant election of Winston.

"Yes," sighed Lawson, as the latest news came into his campaign headquarters, giving one of his strongest counties to his opponent, "Yes, I am licked. The thing is lost and there is no chance to save it."

"Yes, and if it wasn't for the party, and the money I will lose, I would be blamed glad of it. You deserved to be beaten," angrily retorted the chairman of his committee, who had rashly backed his partisan zeal with five hundred dollars, bet on a majority of five hundred votes over all others. "I knew when you commenced your mud-slinging, and began to daub the pegbottoms that you had niggled it. I saw then that you were beaten and I advised the committee to haul you down and put up a more prudent man. And I do wish to the Lord that we had done it. You have killed yourself, sir, as dead as Hector, and, what is worse, you

have given our party a blow from which it will be hard to recover. We never had a better prospect before ; and to think that it should all be lost through your devilish spleen."

"I am very sorry," whined the discomfited and thoroughly beaten politician.

"Sorry ! I should think so. We have lost the district, now ; the banner district of the State, and its loss means the loss of the State, itself, in the Presidential election. Why the dickens couldn't you let the woman alone ? What had she ever done to you that you had to pull down her back hair and turn up her pegbottoms ?"

"Rumor has it," interrupted the secretary of the committee, the facetious Mr. Thomson, "that the lady, once upon a time, had applied the dainty toe (she wears a number ten) of her pegbottom to the seat—the seat of Tom's most tender susceptibilities."

"What do you mean ?" angrily interrupted Lawson.

"Why, I mean that she once kicked you yourself. Put the heavy weight of her pegbottoms upon your matrimonial bread-basket and squashed you flat as a flounder."

"Please speak common English ; I cannot understand your labored metaphors."

“Very well, then, in plain talk, it is the social *on dit* that you yourself courted Miss Hardie, and that she everlastingly sat down on you. No wonder you thought she weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, and that you should feel sore. Only think of a two hundred and fifty pound pegbottom, with an uncertain weight of chignon and ear-bobs flopped down upon a man’s tender affections ! I don’t see how you survived.”

“It’s an impertinent gossip,” gasped the poor fellow. “There isn’t a particle of truth in it ; I do not even know the woman.”

“It is pretty direct any way. It seems that a letter has turned up——”

“Damn the letter,” hissed Lawson, now fairly cornered.

“Well, you may damn the letter, for the letter damns you. I wonder what your wife will say when she sees it in the *Clarion* to-morrow !”

“Good God ! Is that being done ?” aghast at the possibility.

“Yes. Walter Graves, who is to be married to Miss Winston next week, told me they were having a fac-simile of the letter engraved, and as soon as the cuts came they would flood the district with them. They sent the letter to Philadelphia to have it

engraved, and there has been some delay in the work, or it would have been published before now. Old Yates has just gotten it, and it will be in to-morrow's *Clarion*. Society is on tiptoe to see it."

"My gracious! Thompson, this must be stopped. You must see old Yates and buy him off. Tell him that the election is over, and it can do no good to publish it now. I will give him a thousand dollars to suppress it. It will kill me to have the infernal stuff published. I was drunk when I wrote it."

"Well, I will see him, but you ought to be punished for your folly, not in writing the letter, but in attacking the woman."

"And I have been punished, the Lord knows. If ever a mill-stone was hung around a man's neck this thing has been one around mine. From the day I uttered it I would willingly have cut off my left ear to have recalled the words. But here, here is a check for the money; see the old hound and buy him off. And if you can't do that, let me know, and I will take my shot-gun and blow his addled brains out. I shall burn his office and him in it before this thing shall get to my wife."

"I think I can buy him," accepting the check. "And now, gentlemen, we had just

as well break up the rendezvous. There is no further need of gathering here to hear the news."

"No," acquiesced Lawson, "the news will reach us soon enough, God knows. If there is any deficiency in the campaign funds, let me know and I will settle it," and the crestfallen and badly beaten man seized his hat and made a dash for the door, strongly debating in his own mind whether to go out and hang himself, or else to get gloriously drunk and go home and have it out, at once, with his wife.

"Served the blasted fool right. I knew his election last time was the result of accident, and that his renomination was a mistake; the conceited puppy," muttered the chairman, as he adjourned the committee *sine die*, and went out to console himself for the loss of his money in the inspiring bouquet of a brandy cock-tail.

Thompson went straight to the bank, and getting his check cashed, walked over to the office of the *Clarion*, where he found the editor too busy arranging and jubilating over a column of roosters, to even notice his presence, until the urgency of his business made itself known.

"I came to see you, Mr. Yates, in behalf of my friend Lawson——"

“He wants a retraction? Damned if I do it. And if he wants a fight he can get it.”

“No, no! You mistake the tenor of my visit. My mission is one of peace altogether. Now that the canvass is over, we all can afford to be friends again. He, Lawson, feels his defeat keenly, and is truly sorry for any personal bitterness that has been engendered by the campaign, and now that the election is over, and we concede our defeat, he begs that the personalities be stopped.”

“You mean that we are not to crow? That I am to suppress my roosters? Egad, sir, that I’ll never do. This is the first time since the *Clarion* has been ringing that we’ve had a chance to crow, and egad, sir, I intend to let her crow. See here, sir, a hundred dollars worth of new roosters just in from Philadelphia, bought on purpose for this occasion, and you must take me for a bald-headed idiot, if you think I will go and wring their necks off without one of the longest and loudest crows that ever sent the whigs sneaking back to their dens. No, sir; we’ve whipped the fight and we are bound ter crow.”

“Oh, yes! I understand that. We expect you to crow. As you well say, it is the first

chance you have ever had to crow, and it will be the last, so you should make the best of the opportunity, and crow your loudest. But what I want is that spoony letter of Lawson's?"

"What letter?" wonderingly but sly.

"Oh, you know, that infernal silly stuff he wrote to Miss Hardie?"

"Oh, ho, that's it, is it? I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for that, the best trick in the hand. What a pity we hadn't got it before the election; the blankest, spooniest, softest sugar a love-sick feller ever tried to poke in a girl's ear; ha-ha-ha," laughed the jolly editor, catching the cue.

"Yes, its use before the election would have been legitimate, although in questionable taste, but now, Mr. Yates, after the thing is all over, and you have licked us so infernally slick, don't you think that it would be magnanimous to suppress it? Consider his wife, she is really an excellent lady."

"Yes, and he should have considered Winston's wife."

"Oh, yes, of course it was very wrong in him, outrageous, in fact, but a blanked lucky thing for your side. It turned the tide and lost us the election."

"Yes, it was a boomerang that kicked

back worse than an old army musket," laughed Yates.

"Indeed it was, and I should think that the mortification of knowing this would be punishment enough without taunting him with his asinine folly."

"Folly! it was something worse than folly; it was pure, low, down, unadulterated cussedness."

"Well, let us call it that, and I need not assure you that his friends were equally indignant when they heard of it. But now, that is all over, and the laches proved as you know such a lucky thing for Winston, I must try to get you to let the matter drop. In fact, Mr. Yates, to come down to business, I will say that Lawson is willing to pay you dearly for any expense in cuts or composition you have been at, if you will suppress all further publications on the subject. Here," displaying the roll of bills, "he sends you one thousand dollars which I am authorized to give you if you will kill all the matter you have on it; on the subject of the letter, I mean, and will not publish another line on the subject."

"For all time, you mean?"

"Oh, no, only for this. If we are fools enough to ever nominate him again, you are

welcome to resurrect and use it then. It is only now that he wishes it suppressed on account of his wife."

"Very well, I will take it," grasping the money, "for the sake of his wife and the peace of his family. I don't like to do it though."

"And you will destroy the cuts?"

"What, my roosters? Suppress my roosters and hush my crow? No—sir—ee—bob. Here, take your money back. I wouldn't do without my crow for twice this amount," offering the money back.

"No, not the roosters; blank the roosters, let them burst their leaden throats crowing, for all I care. I mean the cut of that infernal letter."

"Ah, yes," with a sudden revelation. "I see now, I see. I didn't quite understand at first. I thought you wanted the roosters too. But I see now, ah, I see! Well, yes-er, yes, I see, I see, yes, I will suppress it. And not another line about the letter shall appear in the *Clarion*, that is, until the next campaign."

"Very well, I can trust you. Good-day, sir," bowing himself out.

"Good-day, sir," closing the door after his visitor. "Well, well, well! if this don't

beat old Tucker himself. The best joke of the whole campaign! Ha-ha-he-he-ho-ho, the blamed fool, ha-ha-he-he, thought that I had an engraved copy of the letter, ho-ho! I wonder what letter he means, ha-ha, and was going to publish it, ho-ho, and sends me all this money to suppress it! he-he-ho-ho! Cock-a-doodle-doo! I feel like crowing myself. Let me see," counting the bills, "yes, a cool thousand, bully for me, I ought not to take it, perhaps," sobering up a little at the honest qualm, "seeing as it was all a mistake. No, I ought not. But then it is too good a joke to lose, ha-ha-he-he,—yes, it is too good to lose, and it serves the cuss right, ha-ha, and besides it will get Carrie a piano. Bless her sweet heart! I will make her a Christmas present. Yes, I'll do that very thing. I'll order it right away—one of Knabe's best. My! my! what a lucky streak! I think I must tell Wat and the boys. It's too good to keep, ha-ha-he-he, bully—bully—bully! The fool is scared of his wife! A thousand dollars to keep her from seeing the letter! What a termigant she must be, to be sure! I'll get Wat and the boys and we'll have a spree, mulct me for a parson if I don't, ha-ha-ha!" and holding his sides to keep them from splitting, the jolly

editor turned to resume his muster of crowing roosters. But he was too exuberant to do anything, and, turning the exultant column over to his foreman, he seized his hat and hurried out to find Wat and the boys, and to have a drink and a laugh and then a laugh and a drink over the joke. It is needless to say that Wat and the boys were easily found and enjoyed the joke and the glass and then the laugh and another glass, each glass giving pungency to the risibility of the joke, and each laugh calling for another glass. Indeed, the risibility of the joke and the exhilarating effects of the glass, combined with the general enthusiasm inspired by the good news which continued to pour in upon the democratic headquarters, had such an inspiring effect upon the usually sober and decorous Walter Graves, as to completely upset the equilibrium of his dignity, and he astonished his gentle *fiancee*, a few minutes after, to say nothing of the little fright he gave her, by bursting into her drawing-room with a Comanche yell, and a "Whoop-pee huzza, for the peg bottoms ! I Golly, Gussie, we've got 'em. Here let's take a kiss in honor of our victory," and before the startled lady could protest he had her in his arms exploding kisses like the popping of a string of fire-crackers.

“Why, Walter, Mr. Graves! What do you mean?” she gasped as soon as she could catch her breath, and pushing him away with instinctive energy, and hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

“I mean, darling, there, Gussie, you needn’t run, don’t be scared, I am not drunk, only the news is just too good for anything. It’s enough to make a fellow feel good all over; I could hug the whole of creation; now don’t, Gussie, I just can’t help it. Why the bottom pegs or I mean the peg-bottoms are on top. Yes, they are for a fact. They just came down like a thousand of brick and have smashed the everlasting demnition bow-wows out of the pumpsoles. Dave is elected, world without end, amen, whoop-pee!”

“Hush, Walter, you must not. But please tell me, is it true?” the pleasing possibility overcoming the little fright and puzzled anger that so womanly resented her lover’s boisterous intrusion.

“True! To be sure it is true. Do you think that I would go whooping around town with the boys like a boiled owl if it wasn’t true. Certain, it is true. The pumpsoles have given it up and gone home, the sickest looking set you ever saw. Lawson

has caved ; and, Gussie, lemme tell you, it's the richest thing that ever happened, ha-ha-he-he, it's enough to make the statue of Niobe herself laugh ; I have just laughed until I have bursted half my buttons off, ha-ha-ho-ho, now, darling, come, don't get scared again ; I am not drunk ; I pledge you my word and honor that I am not drunk ; I'm as sober as—as—the last man in a funeral procession. I haven't drank a drop before to-day since Christmas. You needn't be frightened, Gussie, I tell you I am so-so-o-ber, and will behave myself, only this thing is—is too dev'lish good for anything. Oh ! I do wish Dave was here to help me laugh, ha-ha-ha ! Oh ! Gussie, come back, please don't run ; stay just a minute and let me tell you," and sobered a little by the lady's rising color and an unmistakable movement towards the door, he lowered his voice and went on. "It's about the letter—you know the letter ?"

"What letter ?"

"The letter Tom Lawson wrote Miss Hardie, the one you told me about——"

"Oh Walter ! you know I never told you any such thing. I promised her that I never would tell," with a quick protest.

"Yes, I know. Of course you never told,

but I only guessed it, or else somehow it got out, and some wag went to Lawson and told him that we had the letter and that we intended publishing it in the *Clarion*, sandwiched among the roosters, and the poor fool was so scared that his wife would get hold of it; you see, Gussie, he stands in mortal terror of his wife, and so he sent Dick Thompson with a thousand dollars to old Yates to buy him off, and get him to suppress it——”

“But they could not publish it, for no one ever saw it but me, and I saw Grace put it in the fire myself,” again protested the lady, still in a confused puzzle to know whether her lover was really drunk or threatened with a mild attack of lunacy.

“No ! of course not, there was no copy, and no one would have dreamed of publishing it if there had been one. It was only a joke played on Lawson. Yates himself, at first didn't know what Dick was driving at, but it flashed upon him at last and he just scooped it in. Only think ! a thousand dollars !”

“Did he really give a thousand dollars ?”

“Yes ! a round thousand ; I saw the money myself.”

“And Mr. Yates took it ?”

"Yes! and he went straight to Crews and sent it off for a piano for his daughter. And now tell me, Gussie, if it isn't the best thing that ever happened, and that you don't mind me taking a little spree over it?"

"If he, the wretch didn't deserve everything that is mean, I should say that it was mean in Mr. Yates to take the money."

"Yes, but you see it served him right; it's a part of his punishment. If it hadn't been for that, old Yates would not have touched a single cent of it, but just to pay him for his malicious fling he took it. But now, won't he look blank when he finds it out?"

"He should demand his money back."

"No, he cannot do that. Yates only promised not to publish anything more about the letter, a thing he had no idea of doing at first. But now, Augusta, I see that I have somehow frightened you, and I shall go. You must not be too severe on me; the news is so good and the joke was so laughable and the boys are all such jolly good fellows, that I just couldn't help it, I've sworn off though, as old Rip says, and I'll not do so any more. Please forgive me!"

"Yes, I understand; but oh! Walter, this is all so sad, so hard and cruel to poor

Grace, and so happy and jolly and ludicrous to everybody else. Please promise me, Walter, that—that—you will—will—not——”

“Touch a single drop?” he interrupted, touched and sobered by the tears that came swelling in the eyes of his sweetheart. “Oh, darling, I promise.”

“No, not that, but that you will have nothing more to do with this unseemly revel. It should not be a matter of levity to us, when it was such a hurt to her. Of course we are glad that brother Dave is elected, but—but—oh, you cannot know!”

“Well—well, never mind; I shall not ask to know; I see that you are distressed and your distress has sobered me. I shall go straight to my office and go to work; bye-bye!”

“Bye-bye;” and to show her forgiveness she gave him a kiss, very sweet but scarcely so sweet as the one he had so incontinently stolen.

“I wonder,” he queried to himself as he went away, sobered in truth by the gravity of the lady’s manner, “I wonder what makes Augusta so sad of late. I am sure that at any other time she would not

have minded so seriously this little jollity of mine. It must be something about David and his wife. I wonder if there is anything wrong about the girl? she has never been received in the family yet; and only last evening when I asked Gussie to introduce me to her she was positively upset. It would be very foolish in them to be ashamed of her low origin now that he has married her. He should have thought about all this before. There is something not altogether clear about the matter. The marriage itself was a surprise to everybody. However, it was a lucky thing for Dave, for it has elected him dead certain. He would have been badly beaten, had it not been for the pegbottom alliance. He will be home to-morrow, and then I will know; he cannot fail to introduce me to his wife, and from what Gussie first said about her he need not be ashamed to introduce her to any one."

It was in the evening of the next day before David Winston returned, and though he came back in the flush of a proud triumph, with the laurel crown of victory circling his brow, he felt for the first time in his life, a shrinking back in shame as he entered his father's house and made his way unannounced into the presence of his sister.

They exchanged silent kisses, and stood some moments speechless, and then Augusta had to break the silence.

“I suppose that you are elected?”

“Yes! Thanks to the irony of Momus; How his sardonic chops must have grinned with grim delight as he saw what a travesty on Democracy he was making! *Vox populi, vox Dei*—pah! what a lie. It is the laugh of the gods. I am utterly disgusted with the whole thing, and had it not been that I could spit my scorn in the face of that scoundrel, I would be glad to-night if I had been beaten. It is only that it avenges her upon him that I am glad.”

“Ah! I am glad that you have won, and especially from him. But, oh! my brother, what a humiliating thought that you owe your election to one whom you have so cruelly wronged,” she answered sadly.

“It is not the humiliation; that could be endured. It is a weightier sense than that; a remorse more gnawing than any hurt of wounded pride is eating in my soul. I could be content to owe everything that I have, or ever expect to have—all the good that is possible to be in my life—to her and her alone, if I could only recall the blasphemous words and thoughts I had registered in my soul

against her. But, sister, I must not think or speak about her. It will be best for her name never to be spoken between us. I am going away to-morrow, and shall be gone all winter——”

“To avoid her?” interrupting.

“Yes! I must be frank with you. I could not dare to meet her.”

“Then you need not go for that. She is already gone——”

“Gone!”

“Yes. She left the very day she received your letter. She went to Charleston and from there sailed to Liverpool. She is by this time nearly across the ocean——”

“To Liverpool; across the ocean!” he repeated. “Did her father go with her?”

“No. She went with a lady friend, a Mrs. Whiting, the wife of a cotton merchant. She is in good hands.”

“This is horrible!”

“No. It seems that they had already arranged for the trip, before you came in and interrupted the arrangement, but when you so meanly cast her off again, she thought that it would be best for you that she should go, and now she is gone. It was very good in her, I am sure, and very brave; I should not have gone a step, but would have

stayed and plagued your life out. If Walter was to treat me so when we marry I wouldn't speak to him ever again to save his life."

"Ah! But Wat could not do such a cruel thing. I doubt if in all the wide, wide world another man could be found capable of such a despicable meanness. But I am very sorry that she is gone. I could not have asked such a sacrifice of her. I had rather have gone myself to Australia, to Hindostan, to Timbuctoo, to the uttermost parts of the earth, than to have further disturbed her life. It does seem that she is determined to overwhelm me utterly with the proofs of her goodness and the sense of my own unworthiness. I was wretched enough before, but this—this is the hardest blow of all," and sinking down he hid his face in his hands and sobbed like a woman.

For more than a moment he cried, and then putting away the weakness he started up and asked :

"And does she not know that her going thus will compromise her reputation; will subject her name to scandal?"

"Oh, yes; she is fully sensible of all the danger. She said that Mrs. Grundy must have some one to talk about and her talking would

affect her as little as it could any one ; and then she begged me so piteously not to think her utterly bad, and then she kissed me good-bye, and oh ! my brother, it was the saddest good-bye that was ever spoken, and you can never, never know what a treasure you have lost," and now it was the sister's turn to go off into a little heart-burst of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER THE DARKNESS COMETH LIGHT.

A MONTH had gone by since the wedding of Miss Augusta Winston and Mr. Walter Graves. The brilliancy of that fashionable event gave society a toothsome *pabulum* for a fortnight, and then its ravenous alembic began to hunger for a mess of scandal. It is strange that the same delicate taste that revels in the dainty lusciousness of a rich, ripe strawberry, can lapse into the malodorous pungency of Limburger cheese, and codfish balls ; but so it is, and so, too, with society ; the same little pinky ears, cocked, so charmingly, to hear the pleasing and delicate details of a marriage *fete*, are equally

ready to flop in prurient delight to hear the shocking concomitants of a divorce, or an elopement.

Bergavonia having surfeited itself upon the dainty tid-bits of Miss Winston's wedding, began to long, with a kind of dyspeptic peccancy for the titillating pungency of the cheese. This Mrs. Grundy had, extra flavored by its long-keeping.

The absence of Mrs. David Winston, whom they were all on the *qui vive* to see, from the wedding of his sister, had been noted and silently wondered at, but, in deference to her husband's prominence, had not been openly spoken of. It was only when, by a questionable dickering with the servants and a surreptitious peep for herself through the back window, that that amiable lady stood aghast at the horrid discovery of the bride's absence, not only from her young husband's bed, but from her sorrowing father's board, as well. And then, with the hearty zest of a modern evangelist preaching hell-fire and damnation to a gathering of Sunday-school children, she began the delectable task of "telling it in Gath" and admonishing prudery by expatiating upon the shocking particulars of the flight of the naughty, naughty bride of a week.

It had perplexed the family to determine how best to meet the matter. David had proposed to take Mrs. Grundy boldly by the nose and forestall her evil tongue by publicly acquitting his wife of all blame, and proclaim his own sorrowful condemnation. Against this Judge Winston protested :

“Until the finger of reproach points to her name, there is no occasion for us to speak. Meanwhile it can be given out that, in pursuance of a previously arranged programme, Abigail had, with the consent and approbation of her father, and of our family, gone on a traveling tour to Europe, with friends whom she knew, and whom we could trust, and that when she was to return, was a matter that could not concern any one but her family.”

“Yes,” supplemented Augusta, “and I can tell everybody, all my friends and everybody else, what a sweet lady she really and truly is, and how very, very dearly we all love her.”

“Very well,” acquiesced David, “only no taint of blame or wrong must be attached to her,” and then supplementing the proviso with a punitive corollary, “and I shall pull the vile, slandering tongue out by the

roots that shall dare to whisper a doubt against her honor."

And so, for its little day, Mrs. Grundy detailed the spice and society sneezed on the sly, but the spice soon lost its titillating pungency, and the Christmas gayeties coming on, set the pumpsoles to dancing, and in the winking at, and trying to hide their own little frailties and follies, the poor exiled wife was left to pursue her loveless wanderings in the lands across the sea, unnoticed if not unforgotten.

Only in one home was she missed, in one sad heart was her absence an ever present, ever aching void. The poor old man, her father, had never smiled since the day she went away. And now Christmas was near, and the growing brightness in other homes and in other hearts seemed only to make the darkness more dreary and cold in his.

It was the day before Christmas that he called Sam to his room :

"Sam, tell Bob ter run over an' tell Jedge Winston ter come over. I wants ter see 'im on a pint ov law," he ordered.

Bob hurried away, and within an hour Judge Winston was with the old man.

"I sent fer ye, Jedge, ter ax you ter sorter

look over this paper, an' see zif hit is right. I've bin a tryin' ter fix up a will, an' I'd like fer you ter look over this an' see if hit will stick?"

The Judge adjusted his glasses and read, written in a remarkably firm hand for such stiff fingers.

In the name ov God, aymen ; this endenture witnegses that I, Israel Hardie, bein' ov soun' mine an' in my rite senses, makes this my will and testimony, an' hit bein' the onliest one I ever maid in my life, I wants hit ter stand :

Fust an' foermost, I don't owe enny dets as I knows ov, but if I do, I wants them all pade. Nex, an' secind, an' strongest ov all, I wills and bequethe, an' gives to my lovin', darter Grace Abigail ever'thing I have on God's green yeath, ter have an' ter keep hit all, to witt : Namely, Houses an' Lans, an' Niggers, Hosses and Muils an Kattle, Hogs an' Sheeps, an' Gotes, Craps an' waggins, House, an' kichen furnitur, Tools, et Cet e Ra, Munny, Noats, Rale rode stocks, Bank stocks, Stait an' County bons, an' all. Everthing ter be hern, ter do with thiest as she pleases, only I'd like fer her ter give all the Niggers a Chrismus present ter remember me by, an' I laves hit ter her ter say how much. I also don't ever want her ter let ole Ben an' his wife Sharlit be soled, but ter see that they is allers tooked good kare ov, kase they comed by her Mammy. Nex', third, I appint Jedge Arther Winston as administrator, *ad cap tandem, de bon is non*, or what yer ma' call it, ov the es Tate, ter look arter it, tell Abby comes hoam. Also ter act as gardeen fer her as long as she needs one. Nex', fourth, an' last, all my papers is in good shape, an' will be found in the Iurn safe—Sam will give him the key, az soon az I am dead an' gone. In witness ov all this, I've signed, sealed and delivered this, on this the twenty

seckun' day ov December, in the Year Of Our Lord anny dommy ny 18 hundred an' 54. Sined in the presence ov two witnesses :

“ ISRAEL HARDIE.”

Witnesses, { ROBERT ALLEN, (both freeholders).
 { JACOB HIX,

“ Will hit do, Jedge ? ” after the judge had finished the reading.

“ Yes, this will hold in law. It might be put in better form, perhaps, but it could not be made more intelligible or explicit. Only I note a *hiatus* after the name of your daughter, do you wish that filled ? ”

“ Nan ? ”

“ I mean a blank after the names, Grace Abigail—do you wish that filled ? ”

“ Ah, yes ! I sees. Well, yes—only, Jedge, I waz a leetle jubus on that pint. I waz unsertain thest how Abby stan's in law, an' so I left hit blank until I axed you 'bout it.”

“ Yes, it is very sad, and I am very sorry, but there is no legal difficulty about her name. She has the right by law to the name of Winston. That is her legal name.”

“ Well, I warn't perzactly sertin, and so I left it out. *You* thest fill it in, or—no, mebb y I'd best ter do it myseff, az I writ the rest ov it,” and taking the pen he filled the blank, making it read Grace Abigail Winston.

“An’ you’ll tend ter this, Jedge? I hates ter bother you with sich foolishness, but I’d rather trust you than anny one else, an’ so had Abby.”

“Yes, God being my helper, I will be both a guardian and a father to your daughter. But I hope, Mr. Hardie, that you do not apprehend any danger of a speedy dissolution, and that this is but a prudent precaution that every man ought to take against the certainty of death?”

“Oh, yes! I hain’t skeered ter die, an’ don’t much care when hit comes. If hit warn’t fer Abby, I bleeves as I’d like ter go ter-night. I allers did sorter want ter die in Chrismus times. Hit seems ter me it would be a good time ter die when the angels war all a singing over the borning ov Christ. Mebby so hit wouldn’t be sich a tight squeeze fer an ole sinner like me ter slip in. Yes, Jedge, zif hit warn’t fer Abby I bleeves I’d like ter peg out this blessed night, but I hates ter leave the pore gurrill away out yander, knockin’ about through the world all by her lone seff. An’ asides somehow I’d a liked ter see her one more time afore I started. But mebby hit’s best that she’s away. Hit won’t hurt her so bad, I know, fer if she waz here she’d have nothing else ter do but ter cry,

while thar she'll have strange sights ter see an' friends ter talk to, an' hit won't be so bad nor so lonesum. Yes, hit's best, Jedge, fer her that she iz gone."

"Have you heard from her?" with a painful yearning for the wanderer.

"Oh, yes, I got a letter yisterdy, an' she writes that she's having a rael nice time. Thay iz monstus good ter her—her friends are, an' does ever'thing they kin ter pacify her. They had a good trip an' landed safely. She writ as they had a nice cottage by the river-side ter live in, an' thay waz a havin' lots er fun seein' the theaters an' the opper-rys, an' sich like, an' ever'thing is so strange an' new ter her. Yes, Jedge, hit's best as she iz away; she won't mind it so much. An' when it do come, Jedge, I wants yer ter write ter her yourseff an' sorter saffen hit down-like ter her, az much az yer kin. Tell her that hit waz all well with me, an' fer her not ter cry, and fer her not ter come home on my account at all, but thest ter make herseff at home annywhar she's a mine ter. The same God as would bless her here kin bless her thar. You muss send her all the munny she wants, hit's all hern, nohow, an' she must have thest az much az she wants. I sent her yisterdy a bill ov exchange fer

three thousan' pounds, but she must have as much more every month if she wants hit. Hit seems like hit 'as only made her trubble, an' the sooner she spends hit, mebbey, the better. I'm not skeered ov her wastin' hit, though. Abby hain't a wasteful gurrill, an' kin do more good with a little munny than anny other feller I ever seed. She writ that zif hit warn't fer sellin' an' scatterin' the niggers that she'd like fer me ter sell out, lock, stock an' barrell an' go over an' let us liv' together over thar. If I thort as I could hole out ter reach thar, I'd start this verry minnit. This place here in this grate big house is gettin' so lonesum 'thout her, that I skacely kin stan' it. Hit 'ill never be home agin ter me nor ter her."

Judge Winston was not a very sympathetic man, and was rarely demonstrative in the expression of his feelings, but somehow he now found his hand unconsciously reaching out to the old man's and a strange moisture gathering in his eyes as he answered :

"I shall do all that you ask, Mr. Hardie, and I do wish that I could add something to the cheer of your home. My own is lonely now that my daughter is gone. I do trust that the sunshine may soon gladden yours

again, and that the future may hold many pleasant hours yet in store for you. To-morrow is Christmas ; Augusta is coming home to dinner. Would you mind coming too ? It might be pleasant to you."

"No, I reckon not. I skasely feels strong anuff. I feels myseff a failin' mity fast. But, Jedge, you may think me foolish like, but somehow I can't help the hankerin', but I'd like ter see David. Is he at home ?"

"He is at home. He returned this morning. He has been to Richmond, before the United States district court, attending to my case. And by the by, Mr. Hardie, it may please you to know that I have won my suit and the chances are now favorable for a satisfactory adjustment of the matter without any further litigation."

"Ah, has you ? I am hones'ly glad, shore's yer born I am. Hit 'll serve ter put you on yer feet agin."

"Yes, and now I can pay you back all that you have been so good as to advance for me."

"Please don't say that, Jedge, yer orten ter say that. You knows as I didn't mean that, yer knows I didn't," with a hurt look.

"No — no — I know that you never meant anything but good-will to me and

mine, only, Mr. Hardie, you cannot understand what a humiliating weight it is we have to bear. Of course, we may never hope to be able to repay the full debt of gratitude we owe you, but its pecuniary obligations should and must be satisfied. I can then look you so much straighter in the face."

"Very well, then, zif the munny is ter sta'n atwixt us, I will take it an' put hit ahine us, or you kin thes gin it ter Abby when I'm gone. Hit will hurt her ter take it, but then you needn't ter let on ter her how it come. She don't know nuffin' about it now, an' it would be like rippin' up ole sores fer you ter ever tell her."

"And you have never told her?"

"No, no, Abby knows nuffin' 'bout my bizness affairs. I never pestered her about bizness, kaze I never thort it was a umman's bizness. She only knows as I've got a heap an' hit's all fer her, nor it don't make a fool of her nuther; so if you do this thing you kin thes slip it in with the tuther an' she'll never know the difference. It would hurt her monstus, Jedge, fer her ter know; an' I think as how we've hurt the pore gurrill anuff a' ready without rubbin' salt on the wheelks."

"Yes, yes. I shall never knowingly hurt her, and would give much to undo the wrong we have already put upon her fair young life."

"To be shore, but hit's all gone now, an' Abby is a brave gurrill, or 'umman, rather, for she's a 'umman now; this thing haz made a full-growed 'umman outen her. She hain't no longer the frisky laughin' gurrill she was afore that mornin', but she's a sober-faced 'umman. She's a brave one, though, she's true grit an' will git over this, only I waz monstus sorry ter see her so cut down. Hit hurt her wuss nor you think, an' wuss nor she lets on. But then, Jedge, I reckon hit hurt you an' David too, as well's her an' me; sich things allers do. One can't expect ter lick a skillet without gittin' his nose smutty. Hit was a bad thing all roun' an' we must try to make the best outen hit we can. She's gone now, plum, outen the way ov it, an' we mustn't let it bother us anny more. I wuz ter blame more than annybody. Hit warn't Abby's fault at all. I 'suated her in it, an' I seed it went agin the grain, an' had it a been anny uther feller than David I don't believe she would a stood it. I am monstus sorry, but as I sed afore, I would love ter see David."

“Then I will come to-morrow and he will come with me. We will take a nogg with you.”

“Will you shore anuff ?” brightening up. “I’ll be mighty glad ; hit’s so lonesome here all alone by myseff, with no one but the niggers ter talk to. I hopes as he won’t mine the coming. Tell him, Jedge, that hit’s nuthin’ ’bout Abby I wants ter see him for. Hit’s thes fer my own seff, I wantster see ’im. Nex’ ter Abigail I loves David best ov anny, don’t you mine ?”

“Ah, yes. I understand, and I will bring him. And now, Mr. Hardie, I must go. We will come to-morrow to help you make a merry Christmas,” playfully shaking the bony hand, now somehow strangely cold.

“David,” he said, with a solemnity of tone that startled his son from his study as he found him in the library at home, “I have just come from Mr. Hardie, and if a strong, robust man can die of a broken heart, that old man is dying.”

“Dying ?”

“Yes, dying ; I could feel the very shadow of death in his presence.”

“But is he ill ? Does he need attention ? We should see to it that he lacks for nothing.”

“He made no complaint, but I am sure that he is ill, mortally ill. He has made his will and sent for me to review it. He is fully conscious of his approaching end and is ready for it. His heart hungers for his child, but for her sake he is glad that she is away. ‘She is among friends there,’ he said, ‘and will soon get over it, but here she would have no one to comfort her, and she would have nothing else to do but to cry.’ It was piteous to hear him, and I could hardly keep from crying myself. He leaves his property intact and all for her, and has appointed me executor of the will——”

“You cannot be that?”

“Yes, I have promised, and God helping me to keep the trust, I intend to accept it. It is little enough for me to do after putting all this shame and sorrow upon her.”

“Did he speak of her?”

“Oh, yes ; his heart is full of nothing else but her. He expects her to live abroad ; that seems to be her wish, and if he could live long enough he would join her in England.”

“But where is she now?”

“He had just heard from her. She is pleasantly installed in a home with friends,

in or near Liverpool. I did not see the letter, but he seemed well satisfied about her surroundings. But, David, he wants us to call on him to-morrow."

"But I cannot go. I haven't the impudence for that."

"But you should go. It is not to reopen the old matter that he wishes to see you, but out of the kindest feelings for yourself. He begged me to assure you that it was not about his daughter that he wished to see you, but only for yourself. He understands that the gulf between you two is impassable now, that your lives must forever be apart, but he says that he loves you all the same. "Next to Abigail," he said, 'I love David the best of any.' It was really touching, and I had to inwardly bless the good old man for his strong affection for my son."

"But why should he love me? Is it to punish me that he would shame me with his love?"

"No ! It is an artless, unaffected love, and I believe, David, that it is that that has actuated him in all this unhappy matter. You should not despise an affection so unselfish and sincere."

"No, I do not despise it ; I only wish that I was worthy if it. But knowing what you

know, father, you must understand that his kindness can only be a reproach to me. Oh ! how glad I am that we can pay him back his accursed gold."

"I spoke to him about that ; I really hurt the old man, but finally he said 'Well I expect to be gone, but you can just slip it in with the other assets and let Abby know nothing about it.' It seems that she is ignorant of the transaction now, and it would hurt her to ever know. 'And I think,' he added with a pathos that was simply touching, 'that we have slashed the poor girl enough without rubbing salt in the wound.'"

"And she knows nothing of all this mountain of debt we owe her father ? "

"Nothing ! absolutely nothing ; and he thinks it best for her that she may never know. As I said, he requested me when he was gone to 'slip it in along with the rest,' and she would never know that it was ever out. It was a thoughtful consideration of his—both for his daughter's feelings and for ours. But then he is a remarkable man, David, a most extraordinary man. Had he been born to the station to which he has raised himself, he would have been distinguished for something more than his wealth. But you must go with me to-morrow. We

must do all we can to comfort and cheer him in his desolate loneliness."

"Yes, I shall go. It is just that I should be punished and I shall bow to the curse! And oh! what curse could lie heavier on my soul than the blessing of her dying father!"

"No, my son, you must not let a morbid remorse overcome your reason and affect the better instincts of your nature. This has been an unfortunate affair from the beginning, but it is over now, and we must not exaggerate its miseries. She is gone now, and as her father says she is a brave woman, and among new friends and in a strange land she will soon learn to forget all the little she had learned to know of us here. And you, too, my son, are young and can outlive it. You have much to live for, a high and noble destiny to fill, only do your duty like a man and trust the good God to bless the effort. And now let us go over the Willoughby matter again. Give me a synopsis of General Hull's argument." And in a critical review of the opposing argument, in that interesting case, a diversion from the subject so much nearer both their hearts, was had, if not a complete nepenthe for all its humiliation and sorrow.

“Howdy, boys, howdy !” cried the old gentleman that cheery Christmas morning, as he went out in the hall himself to welcome his honored guests ; “ I’m glad ter see yer, Jedge, monstus ‘glad, an’ you too, David, I’z glad ter see you too ; yes, I shorely iz,” grasping the young man’s hand and dragging him in. “ I wuz a little jubus as yer wan’t a coming,” he added in unconscious extenuation of the effusiveness of his greeting, “ Young fokses iz young fokses, yer know, an’ in jolly times like Chrismus hain’t much time ter be foolin’ long with old codgers like me. Howsumever, I iz monstus glad az you’ve come ; fer I waz gitting sorter lonesum all by myseff, so come erlong right in’ both, on yer, an’ we’ll have a nogg an a siggar. Chrismus is Chrismus, yer know, an’ don’t come but once a year. I ’av’ thes bin a givin’ the niggers all ov thay leetle presents, and thay Chrismus dram. Chrismus iz a good day fer niggers, hain’t it ? Hit allers make me glad ter see ’em,” and, as if to belie the cadaverous look of pain and sorrow in his face, the old man put on a jollity of manner, almost ghastly in its mockery.

The young man noticed that hollow look of care and sorrow on his countenance, and was shocked at the change that had come

since he had last seen him on that unlucky morning, when, like a serpent, he had crept into the fair Eden of his home.

“Here, Jedge, take this seat here, close to the h’ath so’z yer can cock yer feet on the mantilpièce, an’ yere David yer can set yere, by the winder so’z yer kin look outer doors. Sam, pile on a leetle more wood ; gin us a armful ov sassifac. Thar’s nubbuddy yere but we uns, an’ I thes wants yer ter make yerseffs at home. Now, Sam, send in the nog an’ let’s have the siggars; them outen the top buro drawer, thay’s thest splendid. ’Tain’t offen I smokes a siggar, I’d ruther have my ole cob-pipe, but thay’s the best I ever tasted, an’ asides, David, I won ’em offen yer ’lection, so ye must help me smoke ’em. Yes, Jedge, I won ’em offen ole Square Dox, in Sin-clare county. He bet me that Tom Lawson would carry Sin-clare by two hunderd votes an I thes tuck ’im up, a box of the finest siggars in the store, an so I had Mr. Hill ter pick ’em out, an’ thay is good, fer a fac. Yes, Sam, these am thay,” as Sam presented a box of Havanas. “But fust fill the mugs.” The mugs were filled with the foamy nectar. “An’ now, my frien’s, here’s good luck an’ plenty ov it, to you both, an’ ter yer famblys.”

The toast was drunk in solemn gravity, and then the cigars were lit.

"Eh, Jedge! what yer think ov hit?" as the Judge in epicurean delight sent the fragrant smoke daintily curling about his head.

"It is delightful! I never drew a better."

"Yes, I thinks so, an' I sent the Square a han'ful thest ter tantalize 'im. But warn't it bully, though, David, the way you socked it to Tom?"

"Yes. It was very gratifying to me and to my friends, but I have to thank you, Mr. Hardie, for my election. Without you and the help of your friends I should have been beaten."

"Shoo, man, that's nothin'. Hit done me a power ov good, I kin tell you. I thes wanted ter see the demmycrats on top once more afore I died, an' when the news come that you waz elected shore enough, I waz thes willin' ter go 'long rite then, at once, zif hit had a been the will ov the good Lord to a tucked me."

"We were all very proud of the victory," said the Judge.

"In course we ar', an' if David'll do hiz level best fer the State an' fer our people an'

never go back on the demmycrats, hit 'ill thes be the makin' ov 'im, shore. But I needn't ter tell 'im, fer I knows as he'll never renig."

"I should think, sir," the young man answered gravely, "that if I was ever tempted to betray the trust my friends have so generously placed in me, the remembrance of your goodness, and the thought that it would hurt you for me to fail, would be sufficient to hold me loyal and faithful to the trust. I shall always remember your kindness and the remembrance will inspire me to duty."

"Yes, I hain't afeard ter trust yer, David. Only, Jedge, somehow I iz a feelin' monstus quare. That nog somehow or 'nuther don't set well on my stummick, or else hits the siggar. I—I—feels a little sick. Sam, I bleeves yer will have ter come and help me ter bed. Jedge, an' you too, David, I'm sorry, but yer'll have ter 'scuse me a minnit, I'll have ter lay down a minnit—I'm thest ableeged ter lay down."

"Yes, yes, let me help you. Lean on my arm, please," cried the young man, springing to his side; and almost bodily lifting him in his arms he carried the old gentleman to his room.

“Send for his physician, at once,” said the Judge, as they placed him on the bed.

“No, no, Jedge, hit’s no yuse; the jig’s up with me now. I thes feels hit in my bones. This iz death as iz makin’ me feel so quare. Hit ain’t the nog, nor hit ain’t the siggars nuther, but hit’s death. Well hit’s got ter come, an’ az I sed yistrdy I’d ruther it ’ould come on a Chrismus than anny nuther time in the world. Only lemme tell ye, Jedge, afore I can’t; I forgot ter tell ye yisterdy but I’ll tell yer now. Hit don’t make anny difference whar a man’s put, but somehow I’d ruther sleep ’long side ov Abby, my own Abby, as has gone afore, an’ so, Jedge, you’ll see ter hit that I’m burried ’long side ov her, at Hepsiby Church, over on Harrycane. She sleeps thar under the violits, an’ I wants ter sleep thar too, close by her side, so we’ll both be together when ole Gabrill comes ter toot his trumpet. You’ll mine hit now, won’t yer, Jedge?”

“Yes, oh yes. Sam, hurry for the doctor,” turning to Sam.

“And you, David,” continued the old man without noticing the Judge’s interruption, “I’ze monstus glad that you’s yere by me. As I wuz a tellin’ the Jedge yisterday, nex’

ter Abby I loves you better 'an anny one else in all the wurrill, an' sense she hain't yere ter hole my han' I wants you ter lemme hole ter yourn. Hit sorter steddys me like, as I steps off in the dark, an' hit's gittin' monstus dark, David, monstus dark. God bless you my boy, an' Abigail——Ha ! hit's gittin' lighter now, you may let go now, I kin see now," and before the startled friends could realize it the eyes closed, the lips quivered, and without a moan the old man was dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ESTATE IS INVENTORIED AND BERGAVONIA
IS ASTONISHED.

THE grave, thoughtful words of warning that her father had written her had filled Grace's heart with a nameless dread, and with the dread came the yearning wish to be with him again. She was seriously discussing arrangements for a speedy return to America, when a letter came.

She started back with a nameless dread, as she saw the strange superscription, and she hurried aside to solve the dread. Her first

glance was at the signature, and then a little cry of relief, and hope as well, escaped her lips, as the thought flashed over her senses that it was of his son Judge Winston had written.

“ Oh, it is of him, of him ! Perhaps he has relented and has asked his father to intercede. Oh, why did he not write himself ? ” she murmured, and then she hushed her gladness and commenced to read :

“ My DEAR CHILD : ” “ Ah that is sweet ; bless his kind good heart ! ” she interjected, “ My dear child : I know not how to begin the sorrowful task that is mine ; what words of love and sympathy to say to soften the blow. I can only pray the good God, who loves us all and who doeth all things well, to strengthen, support and comfort you in this sad hour of your affliction. Your father, your kind good father, whom you loved so dearly, and who loved you so well, is dead.. He died this Christmas morning, fully conscious of his approaching end, and seemingly without pain. It was my sad pleasure to be with him at the last. We had called to wish him a happy Christmas, and to share his ever friendly cheer. I had seen him the day before and was admonished of the approaching dissolution, but hardly expected it so soon. His death was one that the happiest of us might envy. I looked upon him, as he lay with such a happy smile on his face, and I could wish, without sacrilege, to be in his place. He spoke of you lovingly, even to the end, and his only grief at going was that it might grieve you. He prayed that you might be comforted, and wished that his demise might make no change in your plans. He spoke of the friends you were with and expressed his gladness that you were away, and that in the sympathy of your friends you might find a balm for your sorrow.

“ I wish I knew what words to say that I might comfort

you, but I know how vain is human consolation. I can only pray that the blessed Saviour who died for us all may comfort and bless you."

"Your sincere friend.

"ARTHUR WINSTON."

To the young heart, already bruised and bleeding, this was a heavy blow. For a while she was stunned by its pain, and could only sit in mute anguish, too miserable even for tears. But at last the agony softened, and slipping on her knees she found voice for prayer :

"Alone, alone, all, all alone ! O God, most merciful Father, let my orphaned desolation draw me the closer to Thee !" and strengthened by the prayer she rose and went in to her friends to tell them of this new and greatest sorrow.

She had at the first confided to Mrs. Whiting all the sad secret of her marriage, and the confidence had all the more strongly knit the ties of their friendship, and now that the poor girl had no one else in all the world to look to for counsel and sympathy, the good lady's heart yearned over her sorrow as she would have yearned over a sister.

With the cooing words of sympathy only the gentle lips of a good woman know so well how to speak, she comforted the stricken mourner, and when the next American mail

brought another letter from Judge Winston, she had gathered back sufficient of her native courage to read it with something like her usual calmness.

The letter was a business one, but written with a tender deference that made it less hard for her to understand. It gave first the details of the funeral, stating that in accord with her father's dying request, he had been buried in the country churchyard at Hephzibah, by the side of her mother, and then it gave a synopsis of the will ; notifying her of his appointment as executor of the will, and asking to be informed of her wishes in the matter ; begging, in conclusion, her friendly confidence, and giving assurance of his fatherly interest in her welfare, and sincere wish to serve her, but making no reference to the past, or to their anomalous relations by law, not once alluding to the name of his son.

She noticed the omission, seemingly studied, and somehow it became an additional burden laid upon her fair young life.

It seemed a hopeless cutting off of even the desperate but sweet possibility of a better understanding between them ; of an explanation of the dark mistake ; of his coming again, and a happy reconciliation, which in

spite of her pride and her womanly resolves, would still cling to her fancy and come in her dreams.

Surely, if he was ever to come, he would come now, when in her desolate sorrow she stood so much alone, and in so much need of his countenance; now, when a sympathetic word from him would be so sweet; but no, not a word, even of formal condolence, not a line, not so much as a hint of his remembrance, and she so far away so lonely and so sad.

But she was a brave, true lady, and she smothered back the sigh that came, and putting away the murdered hope, she turned to her desk to answer the Judge's letter.

And this is what she wrote :

'MY KIND FRIEND: Your letters have both come. The first with its sad, sad tidings came a week ago, the last has just been read.

"I should have answered at first, but my heart was too sorrowful to write. Even now, I find it hard to fashion my distracted thoughts into intelligent expression. My life seemed so sad before, so lonely, so unloved, with only my dear father to bless me, and now he is gone and I stand alone, all, all alone in the world. Ah, those who have never felt the icy desolation can never know its pain! None but those who have suffered can realize the truth that:

" 'The heart's the alembic of sorrow,
And tears are the spirits distilled;
Mine own has been tried to its utmost,
And all of its vials are filled.'

"But I must not stop to think, or I shall despair, and to despair is to doubt the goodness of God. Neither must you think that I am complaining against the injustice of man; I am only prostrate in the dreariness of my heart desolation, and hardly know what I am saying. You, in your goodness, must pardon the weakness.

"Touching your last letter: I need not assure you how readily I acquiesce in the wishes of my father. I know that whatever he thought best to be done, will be the best for me. I could wish no better friend than you into whose hands to leave my affairs. If not asking too much of your goodness, I shall beg you to take charge and absolute control of everything; doing, in all things, all that you may deem proper to be done.

"In answer to your friendly inquiries as to my future, I must say: that since this sorrow has come I have been too sad to think, and I am almost without a hope or aim in life. My dear father in his last letter had, in his own kind way, tried to prepare my mind for the terrible blow that was so soon to fall, and, alarmed by the warning, I was hastening preparations to return to him, when your letter came, only two days after his, and told me that it was, alas! too late. Now that he is gone there is nothing to draw me back, and I may not care ever to return again. Life holds but little of promise to me, and that little can best be attained by a quiet home abroad. When I feel stronger, I may be better able to determine what is best, or at least what I shall do. When I so determine I shall write you. In the meantime, I place my interest at home in your keeping.

"Blessing you for your tender words of sympathy and thanking you for all your kindness I remain :

"Most Gratefully Yours,

"GRACE A. WINSTON.

"(MALTBY TERRACE, Jan. 20th.)

"To JUDGE ARTHUR WINSTON."

It was a fortnight later, and the family

had gathered at home to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Judge Winston. The dinner had been eaten, the toasts drank and the little speeches made, when, gathering in the parlor, a little cantata of song had followed, when the Judge, himself a connoisseur in music, spoke up :

“Augusta, did you hear Abigail sing?”

“Oh, no.”

“Then you missed a rare pleasure. She has the sweetest voice I ever heard. Jenny Lind herself might envy her. It is ravishingly sweet.”

“Yes; I can well imagine how sweetly she might sing. Her voice when she talks has music in it. But when did you hear her, papa?”

“The day she was mar—I mean the day I first met her. She sang for the rector, and then she sang ‘Auld Robin Gray’ for us all, and, would you believe it, she set us all three to blubbering. I could not help the tears to have saved my life. And then to set us all up again, she sang ‘The Rat-catcher’s Daughter.’ It was inimitable, and I had to laugh as heartily as I had been crying but a moment before. Well, Jake, have you concluded to bring the mail at last?” as the tardy Jake came in with his basket of mail.

"Ah, here is a letter from Abigail, now," he exclaimed, as he took up an envelope with a foreign post-mark, and breaking the seal he soberly read it.

"Is there anything secret? I hope she is well?" asked Augusta, with something more than a womanly curiosity.

"No, there is nothing secret about it. It is a business letter. I will read it to you," and with a heroic effort at steadying his voice, he read the letter aloud.

"Oh, poor, poor Grace! how my heart yearns to her!" cried the sympathetic lady, brushing back the tears. "She is such a sweet girl! Oh, Walter! suppose it was me away there, so far away by myself and you cared nothing about me? I am sure I should die, if for nothing else than to come back and haunt you."

The young husband could not conceive such an impossible thing and the Judge had to answer.

"Yes, it is very sad."

"And she doesn't say a word about me. I wonder if she has forgotten me or is she still afraid?" continued Augusta.

"Afraid of what?" asked the Judge, sharply.

"Oh, afraid of offending brother Dave."

“Why should she be afraid of that?” quickly asked her brother.

“Because when I told her what you wrote——”

“Augusta ! you did not tell her that ? ” he interrupted fiercely.

“Yes. That is, when she asked me so piteously not to believe all the cruel things that Mrs. Grundy might say about her, I just couldn’t stand it, and I told her that I should believe nothing but that she was the dearest, and purest, and sweetest sister in the world, and I intended to love her always, I didn’t care what you might say. And Oh ! brother, you ought to have seen the hurt look in her eyes, as I said it ; and then she asked me if I really meant it, and if you wished me to give her up too ? and I told her yes ; but that I was not going to do it, and that if I had to choose between you two that I would take her, and let you go to the dogs, and I should have done it too, only she said, ‘No, blood is thicker than water, and she could not stand between brother and sister.’ And then before I could protest or explain, for I didn’t mean to tell, she kissed me good-bye and ran up to her own room, and locked herself in, leaving me standing alone in the parlor. I should have

followed her, only I knew from her looks that it would do no good. Oh, brother Dave, I think that you have acted like a hound towards her, I don't care if Walter does hear me say it."

"Yes, lay on! I deserve it all, and I despise myself worse than you or she or any one else can despise me for blighting her life as I have, only, Gussie, you ought not to have told her that, for I did not mean it."

"But, Dave, cannot the matter be righted? What is there wrong between you? If she is a proper woman, why not seek a reconciliation?" asked Walter.

"It is a matter that need not concern you, sir!" angrily retorted the young man.

"Very well! I shall have no more to say about it. Come, Gussie, we will go," and, touchily resenting his brother-in-law's rebuff, he arose and tucking his wife under his arm turned to leave the room.

"Yes, I am quite ready, only, brother Dave, I am sorry that I hurt you."

"No, no; you did not hurt me, for you are quite right. And, Wat, I must apologize for my acerbity of temper. You do not know how utterly impossible your suggestion of a reconciliation is, and I would have to humiliate myself too much to explain.

✓ The matter is all closed now and it cannot be reopened. I am sorry for the lady, and do most tenderly feel for her in this last sad affliction. So far as her orphaned desolation is concerned, one would have to be heartless indeed not to sympathize with her. But as to the future she is not so utterly forlorn. When she recovers from the grief for her father's death, and tires of her loneliness, she has only to let the world know that she is the untrammelled mistress of over a million, to have friends, and sympathetic admirers by the score, and suitors by the battalion," he added almost despitely.

"Of course! Such a woman, with such a fortune, cannot fail to attract attention and admiration, and when this sore heals, it will be equally natural for her to crave that homage which is so naturally her due," said the Judge.

"Of course it is natural. The female Barkis is always willing," and in an unaccountably ill-humor the young man turned from the room.

"I tell you, Walter, what is the matter with brother Dave! he is jealous already," whispered Augusta, as she snugly cuddled herself under her husband's paletot, as they walked out into the cold.

“But, Gussie ! what is the trouble between the manyhow ? Is the girl really bad, that he should leave her ? ”

“No truer, purer, better, or sweeter girl than Grace Hardie ever lived, and it is all brother’s fault. You see, the marriage was arranged for convenience. That is somehow, I don’t know how, it was something about money ! I never could tell heads from tails in it. They knew nothing about each other, and of course it was a mercenary thing to do, and they are both ashamed of it ! and then, when that wretch Lawson took it up and taunted brother Dave with it so cruelly, it drove him mad ; and in a foolish fit of desperation he determined to break it off without ever seeing her again, and he must have written something very shocking to her ; and she, though a very sweet girl, oh ! you don’t know how really sweet she is, but she is as proud as a queen, and as high-strung as brother Dave himself, and so she gave it to him back again as good as he sent, and a little better, I’m thinking, for she is quite capable of it, and before anybody could interfere, or brother Dave could get home to see her, she went away. I do not blame her so much, but I am sorry for them both.

Had she only waited until he got back, I am certain that they would have made it up, for I know that she loves him, and you can see for yourself that brother Dave is just getting desperate about her. But going away as she did, and snapping him up so quickly, and taking him at his word, and writing him to take steps for a divorce, she quite burned the bridge behind her, and now there is nothing left for them to do, but to get a divorce and try and find some one else to marry, which I suppose will be the upshot of it all. It's a great scandal, and I have quite cried my eyes out about it. Oh! Walter! suppose it was you and I so far apart, with all the blue waves rolling between us, this cold, cold night? It would kill me," and with a little shiver at the dire possibility she cuddled the closer to his side, and in the diversion of his little cooing arts of assurance, that it was not "you and I" the subject was entirely forgotten.

In due course of time Judge Winston submitted the will of Israel Hardie for probate, and without contest was ordained executor of the vast estate. His first act was to submit to the court a statement of his own indebtedness to the estate, with a certified check to cover the full amount.

And then, with that mountain of misery, which had so long weighted him down lifted from his life, he felt a rejuvenation of years that almost made him young again.

He found the old man's affairs in the best of order ! A simple schedule which would have served as a model of simplicity for a business university, made in his own hand, showed at a glance the exact status of the estate. The most minute item of every transaction had been made with only one exception : no mention, nor trace of mention, was found of the money advanced on account of the Carden estate. Only one entry made on the day the money had been paid could suggest to the Judge the slightest clew to the transaction. That entry was this :

“\$26,480,—pade as weddin’ giff ter Abigail.”

Nor was any record found of the other sums due by Judge Winston. Under the head of, “Amount spent for Abby’s weddin’ ” was found the following :

“\$20—pade Mr. Snook fer fixin’ platform in Parler ter marry on.

“\$60—ditto, Mr. Galseran fer makin’ weddin’ bell ov roses.

“\$100—pade fer presents fer the Niggers.

“\$40—pade fer Caik an’ orringis an’ sich like.

“\$220—totell, God bless her, I wish hit waz moar.”

The amount expended upon the campaign was itemized as follows :

“\$600—pade fer shuze fer the *pegbottom* wimmin an childern in Sincleer.

“\$200—pade fer dito ditto in Walker county.

“\$1500—pade in cash ter Committy.

“\$50—pade in cash fer Bar-By-ku at Harry-kin.

“\$10—pade fer torches an’ so-forth at the huraw after the lecshun.

“\$2,360—toatil—all well spent.”

“Do you see this, David ?” asked the Judge, as together they were going through the matter. “If it was not that I know it would hurt her I should insist that this amount be returned to the estate ; what say you ?”

“No ! I should wish it to stand as it is, a perpetual monument of that old man’s goodness to me. It may inspire me to better things myself. If I were to try to liquidate the debt it would be in giving alms to the poor in his name. I cannot insult his memory by offering to return it to her. But, father, the

tenderest thing of all is this statement of the wedding expenses. What could be more expressive of a father's love for his darling than this? Had it been for a public display one might have expected something like this; but only for her, and perhaps me, all this costly preparation was made. And then this item: one hundred dollars paid for presents for the negroes; he even wanted the negroes to be glad. And I—only think! father, what a sacrilege—I had no heart in it all! It is infamous! I wonder that I was not stricken dumb with the lie on my lips. Oh! if I had only known; if we had only met before and under different circumstances! how different it all might have been. And he, if he had not been so frank with his friendliness, so profuse with his favors I—I might have been led to see. I did not understand him, as I sadly misunderstood her. Oh! I do hope that he knows now how it all was and why it was that I so derided him and so reviled her.”

“We can trust, my son, that he is now happily above all such susceptivities, and I am sure that he did understand you, better than you understood yourself. It was an unfortunate thing that we did not understand him. Ah! how tender is this

comment : ‘God bless her, I wish it was more !’ There speaks the fullness of the father’s heart for his child.”

The completed inventory of all the property returned to the court footed up to over fourteen hundred thousand dollars, a sum that startled the community with its magnitude ; for while Israel Hardie had been accounted a rich man, there were few, even among his most intimate friends who had any conception of the surprising munificence of his fortune.

“ Ah ! ” cried Mrs. Grundy, “ no wonder the high-bred Mr. Winston could afford to marry the girl, all smirched as she was, for such a princely fortune.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A LITTLE BIRD FLEW ACROSS THE OCEAN AND
WHISPERED SOMETHING TO DAVID.

TIME, which touches with healing fingers all nature’s wounds, is no less kind to the hurts which quiver in the human heart, and as the days went by, the burden, which seemed at first greater than she could bear, was lifted from her life and something of its

old-time gladness once again sparkled in the eye and trilled in the song of the groomless bride, and when the summer came, bringing a respite to Mr. Whiting from the drudgery of the Cotton Exchange, and all things were ready for the long-promised sight-seeing on the Continent, she was as radiant in spirit as she was peerless in beauty and vigorous in health and in strength. And so, one pleasant morning in the rosy June, they closed the establishment at Maltby Terrace and turning over the keys of the cottage to a keeper they began their journey. But as their journey lay through ways which are traversed to-day, I need not follow them with a detail of its scenes. The sights they saw then are the sights to be seen to-day, only the journey as it is now made by steam, in swallow-flights from city to city, had then to be made, in greater part, in slow-plodding, and provokingly lumbering diligences, loitering by waysides and picking up stray bits of enjoyment, not now dreamed of by the more expeditious voyager.

All through the summer days they lingered amid the pleasant valleys that lay in the shadow of the Alps, and when the frosty breath of autumn began to blow

crisp and chill, they turned southward, towards the sunny plains of Italy. Rome, Naples, Genoa, Leghorn and Florence were visited, and duly ransacked for curiosities. From each place little predatory excursions were made into the surrounding *campagnas*; looking up, and touching, with not irreverent fingers, the local *bric-à-brac* of the shadowy ages, long-ago gone.

It was in one of these little sallies from Florence, one soft sunny morning, that they came across a spot so pretty in its framework of hill and woods, with its outlook across the valley below, so restful in its pastoral beauty, that they all had to instinctively halt to gaze and admire.

"How like the view from the plantation house at home," said Grace, after a few moments, silent wonder at the surprising similitude. "I have seen nothing before this that conveyed even a suggestion of home."

"This is very pretty, and the skies are soft like the skies of our own sunny south," answered Mrs. Whiting.

"I think I should like to live here. I wonder if the cottage, with its little plat of garden, could be bought?" Grace queried, half to herself.

“It could be leased, of course ; only if the rascally proprietor was to know that you wanted it he would ask a double price,” answered Mr. Whiting.

“Then I do want it. It may shock you to know of my sudden whim, but I feel as if this must be my home. Mr. Whiting, will you please help me to secure it?”

“Certainly ; only you must not be too precipitate. Let us see if we can get a look through the house. Antinelli, ask the good lady if we can stop in for awhile. Tell her that we are travelers looking up matters for a book, with pictures in it, and we will put her and her child in the picture.”

Antinelli, their guide, hurried in to return in a moment to say that “The signora bids the ladies welcome.”

The inspection was satisfactory : everything was charming, and the sudden whim was resolved into a settled purpose to buy the cottage, and to make it her home. Home ! Ah, how the weary heart longed for the sacred shadow of home !

Luckily the place could be had, the cottage having been taken the year before by a rich Florentine merchant, and fitted up in the most elegant style for a home for his bride, but with the waning of the honey-

moon, the bride tired of its rural solitude, and began to sigh for the more congenial gayeties of the city, with such a pathetic charm in her eyes that the young husband, for the sake of the pathetic eyes, had to abandon his pretty nest to the care of a keeper, and carry his birdie back to a gilded cage in the city. He would doubtless be willing to sell it now, on the most favorable terms.

The United States consul was consulted, and after looking into the matter, as well as investigating the character of the vicinage, and finding nothing objectionable in either, he concluded the purchase for her. And this is how it came about that on the twentieth of October, the anniversary of her wedding day, the virgin bride of a year took possession of her home, so far away among strangers, in that strange land beyond the sea.

The faithful Nanny was with her. For no consideration of freedom, so artfully whispered in her ear, could induce her to leave her darling young mistress. The gardener and his wife, whom she found in charge of the place, were retained ; a cook and coachman were added, and the complement of her household was perfected.

Miss Whiting would remain with her all winter ; Mr. Whiting had to hurry back to Liverpool to commence again the drudgery of the office and the cotton-yard ; his wife went with him, but both would rejoin her in the early summer to resume the delightful rambles, next time to be projected into the Levant, and a voyage up the Nile.

Time, which had thus soothed the bruised and broken spirit and filled the life of the despised wife with a rational and restful content, had not been nearly so gracious to the husband. Each load that had been lifted from her life seemed by the sport of the *Parcæ* to have been transferred to his.

It seemed a grim irony of Lachesis, to allot to these two, whom she had so capriciously coupled together, a certain portion of misery, and the burden which one cast off, had to be taken up and borne by the other. Had they been together, a mutual strength might have sufficed for a mutual load, but being so far apart they could not share the burden, and one at a time they had to stagger under it alone.

The lapse of days, that softened the memory of her sorrow, only gave poignancy to the remorse of his, and if there ever was

a thoroughly miserable man in the world David Winston was one. But he bore his burden with a manly dignity ; no one, not even his father, ever heard a word or sigh of complaint. Happily for the ultimate safety of his mind he found in the distracting duties of his profession a respite, and in doctoring the business troubles of his clients he found a salve for his own.

When the congress opened, in December, he found in its excitement a new diversion. With all the enthusiasm of his young Southern nature he entered in the exciting and ever memorable contest for the Speakership, and in its partisan bitterness he forgot for a time the nameless yearning that had so constantly gnawed at his heart.

With a modest diffidence he took his place, but without arrogant assertion he soon made his way to the front, where he stood as one of the recognized leaders of his party.

The session was a long and bitter one, and was only adjourned late in the summer, that the members might return home to enter a hurried canvass for re-election.

It is a hard thing in our American system, that a young congressman can only have a half chance to demonstrate his fitness for his

place. His first term is not yet half out, and he is hardly inducted into the routine of business, before he is called upon by an impatient constituency to show proof of his capacity by exhibiting his record, a record the poor devil has had no possible chance to make.

Without opposition Winston was re-nominated by his party for re-election. His embryo record had been approved by his party leaders, and he was again put before the sovereigns for their august endorsement. But the sovereigns themselves are not always so easily satisfied as the party leaders, and it was uneasily felt that the hardest work would have to be done to placate the fickle herd.

The whigs had displayed a more judicious choice in the selection of their candidate. Lawson was retired, and Judge Vassar, an adroit politician and popular speaker, had been put in the arena, and as the question of shoe soles was not expected to figure in the canvass, the race would have to be run up on more equal chances, and a higher plane.

It was a more dignified canvass than before, but not nearly so enthusiastic. It was naturally a whig district, but with the prestige of his former triumph, Winston entered

the field with a comfortable assurance of success. But when the election came off, and the returns began to come in, showing losses here, and losses there, and surprising losses everywhere, his assurance began to ooze all away, and with a sickly feeling of disgust he began to prepare his mind for defeat. The heavy weight of the pegbot-toms seemed to have been cast upon the opposite scale, and the weight of the pegbot-toms was the pea that regulated the political beam. He missed the adjusting hand of old Israel Hardie to regulate the pea, and he felt, not without a vague sense of retributive justice, that he had been weighed and found wanting. Only one more county was to be heard from, that was Walker, a whig county, and there was but slight chance that he could carry that, and, unless he did carry that, he was beaten. If Hurricane came in gallantly for him as it had done before, there was a possibility of his election, albeit by the skin of his teeth. But would Hurricane come in? Ah, would it!

At last, after a tantalizing delay, the news from Walker came in. Esquire Wheeler himself brought the returns and they gave Winston the victory. Old Hurricane came in as one man for Israel Hardie's daughter's

husband, and put him in by precisely ten votes.

“Yes, sir, Mr. Winston, I tell you what’s a fact, it was a mighty tight squeeze, but we made it. I golly ! I thought once that we was gone up and I tried to hedge on my bets but I couldn’t do it. No, sir-ee, I was completely swampt, when old Milo Sneed got a letter from your wife——”

“From my wife ?” with a start.

“Yes, from little Abby, begging him and all the kin to do their best for you, and sending two hundred dollars for barbecues and other things, you understand, and that fixed it. You see they had somehow or other heard some queer tales about the way you two were living, and they were uncertain which way to go, until the letter came, and that decided them, and they just turned and followed Old Milo like a passel ov sheep following a bell-weather. You see he gave a barbecue and knocked the head out of a barrel of whisky, and told everybody that it was little Abby’s treat, and they just come in with a whoop, over two hundred solid, and now you are hunky and so am I ; I won my bets, two hundred dollars, besides a pair of boots for Tom, pegbottom at that. Whoop-pee, come, old, boy

shake, and lets go over to Charley George's and take a horn."

"Thanks, I am very grateful for your good news and grateful for your support, but you must excuse me from the horn. I have a headache now. You will find the boys, though, and tell them that it is my treat."

"What, are you not dead certain that you are out of the woods yet?"

"Oh, no! There is no longer doubt of my election, thanks to your good report," and lowering his breath to a secret heart-whisper, he added, "and thanks to the sweet lady. It must be to her that I again owe my election. Ah, well! I had rather owe it to her than to any one else in all the world. May heaven bless her sweet heart."

The surprising turn of affairs electrified democratic headquarters, and another "hoo-raw" was inaugurated, and Editor Yates got out his roosters from their ignominious hiding-place, and had them to crow again, as tantalizingly as before, even though they had but a meager majority of ten votes to crow over.

The worthy editor missed the thousand-dollar windfall, though, and Miss Carrie got no Christmas present this time, but as she

was soon to be married, anyway, it did not so much matter.

That night after he had made his speech at the "hooraw," David Winston went to his room, and after sitting awhile in a sober, far-away thought, he turned up the light and wrote :

"MILO SNEED, ESQR.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"I write to thank you, and, through you, to thank my friends for your kindly help in my election, and to assure you that any claim you, or any of them, may ever make upon my gratitude will be gladly recognized.

"Our good friend, Esquire Wheeler, has told me of your valuable services. He also, stated that you had, pending the contest, received a letter from Mrs. Winston. Now, sir, I may not try to explain to you why I should wish to see the letter, but as I do most earnestly wish to see it, I trust that if, without any violation of confidence you can do so, you will send it to me, under the solemn pledge on my part of its safe return to you. I enclose envelope and stamps.

"Your compliance with this request will add another to the many obligations I already owe you.

"Your friend,

"DAVID R. WINSTON."

Slight wonder was it that he was puzzled to explain to Mr. Sneed the reason why he should wish to see his wife's letter, when to have saved his life he could not have explained to himself why such a hungry, almost passionate yearning had possessed him to see it.

Nor was the yearning appeased until a week later, when the slow-moving mails brought it, carefully enclosed in a scrawl from Mr. Sneed :

“DEER SUR, I sends cuzzin Abby’s letter, an’ you muss be shore an’ sen’ it back ter me, fer I wuddent take a forty-dollar bill fer it.

“MILO SNEED.

“Ps. didnt we wool ’em thow ? ”

Tenderly he opened the precious missive, still redolent with the fragrance of her sachet, and then softly kissing the name he read :

“MY FRIEND AND COUSIN:

“You may possibly be surprised to hear from me, in my far-away home, but I am not so far away that my heart does not go fondly back to its dear old home in America, and to the dear friends I have there. I often think of them, and never without silently blessing them. I receive the papers every week and they always bring me welcome tidings. I see by the *Democratic Clarion*, that Mr. Winston is a candidate for re-election. My dear father told me once, how true you and your friends were to him before, and how glad it made him to know it. Were he still alive I am sure that he would ask you to help us now. Will you think it selfish in me to ask you myself? If you can, I trust you will help him. I shall thank you for every word you may speak in his behalf, as sincerely as if spoken for my own self, and to aid you in the good cause, I enclose you a draft on the firm of Whiting, Stone & Co., of Charleston, for two hundred dollars; any merchant in your town will cash it for you.

"I will be glad to hear from you, and if there is anything that I can do for you, please let me know, and I trust that you will ever find me as ready and willing to help you as you have always found my father."

"Truly your friend and cousin,

"GRACE ABIGAIL WINSTON,

"FLORENCE, ITALY, Oct. 1st.

P. S. I should have told you that I am living in the country, a few miles from the city of Florence, but I send in to the United States consulate every day for my mail, and should you write to me, you will direct your letter thus :

MRS. G. A. WINSTON,

"Care of United States Consulate,

"FLORENCE, ITALY.

"This is a beautiful country but not nearly so beautiful as our own."

"Ah! Sweetheart, sweet sweetheart; poor, tender, gentle heart; how kind it was in her to do this for me! how thoughtful and how kind to think of me at all! Ah! what would I not give to go to her, to stand before her as a man, and to ask her to love me; to be to me in truth what she is in the mockery of a name, only. Ah! darling—darling! I can only bless you, and I am not even worthy to do that," and again kissing the letter he tenderly folded it away to be sent back to its fortunate keeper.

That evening he called upon his sister, when the all-absorbing subject of his re-election was brought up :

"And do you know, sister, that it was all owing to her, to Grace, I mean?" he asked.

"To Grace! how?"

"She wrote to her kinsman and friends in Walker and secured their help for me! It was only that that saved me."

"Oh! is that so? I am so glad, and, brother Dave, let me tell you, and is it not a singular coincidence? I have just heard from her this very day myself."

"Oh! have you?" with an eager interruption.

"Yes! I have a letter from Pauline," Pauline was her sister-in-law, "and she writes how they stumbled upon a Mrs. Winston, near Florence, and she wants to know if she is any kin to me. But, here Kate, take the baby and I will get the letter and let you read it for yourself."

"Give me baby."

"Oh! yes; go to Unky Davy. Isn't he a tweet 'itty feller? Muzzer's 'ittle darlin," surrendering the baby with a kiss, and hurrying up to her room for Pauline's letter.

"Yes, here it is! It only came to-day. I will read it to you," she cried, returning in a minute, and seating herself close to the lamp she read:

“ PALAZZO DE GONDA,

“ FLORENCE, Oct. 18th.

“ MY DEAR SISTER :

I wrote you from Parma, only a day or two ago, but I have to write again so soon to tell you about one of the queerest surprises that we have yet had. Well ! You see yesterday, we spent in doing the city, visiting the galleries and what not, and so this morning it looked so pretty outdoors that Uncle Jake thought that we would take a little excursion into the country (or *compagna*, as they call it here), to see the way the Italians farm.—You see he, and mamma, are looking out for new kinks in farming, and mamma wanted to see how they raised maccaroni ; she thinks that with our fine climate we can raise it as well on the plantation as they can here. And so, after an early breakfast a long, gawky guide came around with an open barouche for mamma and Sue and me, and a scrawny-looking horse for Uncle Jake. The weather promised just splendid, and we started out in high glee, expecting to make a day of it, but we hadn't gone more than five or six miles before all at once a storm rose up and there we were, with Sue threatened with a chill anyhow. We were in a terrible pickle, until a turn in the road brought us in sight of one of the coziest, cunningest, loveliest little nests of a cottage you ever saw. And what do you think we saw grinning at the gate ? I just know you could never guess in all your born days and so I will tell you ; will you believe it ? It was the coal-black face, white eyes and ivory teeth of a sure enough negro girl, grinning from ear to ear. It liked to have taken my breath to see her, and my very heart was glad. It was the first honest face we had seen since we had touched the Continent. ‘ Ah ! ’ says mamma, ‘ we can find shelter here,’ and she told the guide by signs to stop. (You see the dolt can't understand a word we say although he assured Uncle Jake that. ‘ Me speakee vera weel Anglice,’ when he can't speak it at all). However we pay him back in Italian just as bad.’ So Uncle Jake told

him to ask the negro if we could get shelter from the storm, and he jabbered something to her when she broke and ran into the house as if we had been a band of brigands come to plunder the place. But soon a lady came out, and oh ! sister Gussie ! you should only see that lady, the prettiest and sweetest face I ever looked upon. She reminded me at once of the picture of the Madonna, and we all three whispered in the same breath, 'Oh ! how beautiful !' She jabbered out something to Uncle Jake who had ridden forward to the gate, and was bowing with his hat off and staring with all his eyes, when the guide spoke something to her in the same outlandish lingo, when, with a smile, she came forward, quite to the gate, and spoke in the sweetest of English : "Your guide tells me you are English tourists and wish shelter from the storm. I shall be very glad to offer mine," and then she opened the gate, and her manner was so cordial and sweet that we all tumbled out at once and walked right in, and I felt at home the very minute I put my foot in the door. And then the negro, she was just as much like home as home could be itself, and I could hardly keep my hands off from kissing her, black as she was. Everything was so nice and so free and so home-like, that we were not long in getting acquainted, for when mamma told her that we were not Englishmen at all, but Americans, and from the south at that, she looked just like she had found a long-lost tribe of cousins, and uncles, and aunts, and then she said, with a kind of sad smile, that she was from the south too, and that only made us the closer acquainted. She is a Charleston lady, and with another one, there are two of them, a Miss Whiting from the same city, is living here all by themselves. Their relative, Mr. Whiting, is a rich cotton merchant and stays the most of his time in Liverpool. All this I found out from the negro girl, Nanny is her name. The storm lasted until afternoon and we had to stay for dinner, which was a treat, I assure you. (Sue is rolling all over the bed now, for eating too much of the snow-white

honey.) After dinner we had music, and such music ! the sweetest song I ever heard. Sue commenced it; she saw the piano in the little parlor and commenced to bang away, which led to me, and then Uncle Jake to be polite asked her for a song, which, to be polite, she had to sing of course. She sang ' Within' a Mile o' Edinboro' Town ' and she just completely captivated us all. It fairly lifted Uncle Jake out of his boots, and I will tell you seriously, sister Gussie, Uncle Jake has met his fate at last. He is just dead in love with her and he has altered all our plans. We were to have started to Rome to-morrow, but he has stopped the baggage and taken rooms here for a month. And what is funniest of all mamma encourages him in it, and is as much pleased with the match as he is. If the lady is all right, and I am sure she is, for such a sweet face could not hide anything wrong—there is nothing but goodness written all over it—I think myself that Uncle Jake will do well to get her. But, sister, the strangest part of it all is her name ; Her name is Winston. I wonder if she is any kin to your people ? She is a widow and very rich ; (this much mamma wormed out of Miss Whiting, who is also a very nice person.) She has no children, though, and it would make no difference with Uncle Jake if she had a dozen, he would be willing to lump them all to get her. I don't think she ever had any, for she looks too young and is as fresh and rosy as you were the night you were married. We have tried to find out all we could through the guide but he is too stupid to know anything, and all he can tell is that she is called the Lady Princess. She is lovely enough for a princess and gracious enough for a queen, but she doesn't pretend to be either. Uncle Jake is completely on his head about her, and while he is always talking about her himself he flares up like a fire cracker if we so much as hint anything wrong about her. This is a sure sign, mamma says.

"We are going out again to-morrow, and she has promised to come in the next day after to show us all the rarer sights of the city, which strangers cannot find for them-

selves. You may wonder at this rapid progress in a chance acquaintance, but you should know that when one is so far away from home a common nationality makes us all akin. The first sight of Nanny, the negro girl, endeared them to us at once, and Nanny seemed just as glad to see us.

"But I have spun this letter to a tiresome length. I will write again, soon, and let you know how Uncle Jake is making it. If she is to be won, and a dear good, kind hearted and handsome gentleman can win her, we will carry a new aunt back home with us, or else leave the best uncle in all the world behind back here.

"My love to brother Wat. Kiss baby for me and when you see Charlie tell him that I am still as mad as ever.

"Your loving Sister,

"PAULINE F. GRAVES."

"There, isn't that a romance for you?" asked the sister as she finished the letter.

"It promises to be, at any rate. It is ridiculous! the idea of that conceited old fool Jake, aspiring to her hand; she wouldn't think of such a thing."

"But why not? He is not so old; he is handsome, rich and accomplished, and is really a good catch for any girl. I, *entre nous*," with a little blush, "came very near setting my cap for him myself, before Walter came. But, brother Dave, could she marry him or any other man and you still living? Did your marriage really count for nothing?"

"Yes, for nothing, or less than nothing. It was a hollow mockery and can be set aside.

I will release her whenever she asks it. I ought not, perhaps to wait for her to ask it, but it is her right. She understands that she has only to petition for a divorce, for one to be granted. Even were I dog enough to contest it she could get it anyhow. But I shall not contest; I shall do all I possibly can to forward her wishes, only somehow it would hurt me to see her throw herself away on such a 'masher' as Jake Gorman. Heigh-ho! But it can be none of my business, and if he is lucky enough to win her, well, he will have to wear her. But, Gussie, it was a miserable thing for me that we ever met. But the idea of that old *blasé*, bald-headed bachelor winning such a peerless woman! Fudge! Here, devil take it, take the baby. It makes me sick to think about it. Why, in the name of goodness, didn't you catch him yourself, that would have settled his hash. Good-bye! I leave for Washington to-night. Write as soon as you hear from Miss Pauline and let me know how the farce turns out. Tell Pauline to throw Charlie over, and if this thing does happen, I will marry her myself just for spite."

"Yes, and you will do well to get her, if, after throwing away such a girl as Grace,

you could ever have the heart to marry another. Do you know that I always did think that you were silly in not courting Pauline at first, instead of wasting yourself on that incorrigible flirt, Gertrude Carden."

"Perhaps so. But, then I always was a fool where women were concerned. But tell me: do you ever hear of, or see Gertrude?"

"Oh yes, I saw her yesterday."

"Ah! What was she doing?"

"Oh! you can never guess."

"Chewing tulu?"

"Pshaw! No."

"Then tell me?"

"Oh! I know it will shock you, but then it is so; like the Ettrick Shepherd's quondam belle, in the Noctes Ambrosianæ she was 'sitting on the porch sooklin' twins.'"

"Good Lord! what a happy deliverance!"

"Yes, but they were really pretty babies, and she seemed just as proud of them as if they had been triplets. Her husband, Mr. Hardie, they say has turned out to be a first-rate fellow and is devoted to her. But they do say that she henpecks him awfully.

"Good, good! layon, Macduff." But now I must go. I warn you to keep a sharp look-out on Miss Pauline. I am just desperate enough for any exploit. Heigh-ho! Good-bye."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONJUNCTION OF VENUS AND JUPITER.

It was not altogether an unaccountable pique that hurried the young congressman back to Washington. His help was needed in finishing up much left-over committee work, in order to be ready for the opening of the coming session.

His party had been successful all along the line, and in addition to the Administration would have a safe working majority in both houses.

This was a matter of party pride, and of party gratulation, and, added to the satisfaction of his own re-election, should have made the young statesman hilarious in spirits, and put him in good humor with himself and with all mankind. But somehow the happy concatenation failed of its enthusiasm, and his spirits were strangely dull, and his face wore such a look of sober dejection that strangers in passing had to turn to note it. His friends wondered at it, and he himself was a little puzzled to

know. He felt as a wanderer in the dark must feel, when, lifted up by the sudden gleam of a light ahead, sees the light as suddenly flicker out, leaving him to grope his way through the inky darkness, more helpless than ever. Indeed, something of this character was in truth the cause of his despondency. The unexpected but timely interest manifested by his discarded wife, in his welfare, had flashed up like a aurora of promise to his lonely way and unconsciously to himself had lifted his spirits up out of their disconsolate depths, when, like a muffler, dropped without warning, came the gossipy letter of Miss Pauline Graves, and now his way seemed rougher than ever, and the darkness more dreary.

He knew Jake Gorman to be a prince among women; rich, handsome, accomplished, and possessing that rare magnetism which seems to attract with unerring precision the delicately poised needle of social femininity, and knowing him thus he felt him to be a dangerous, if not invincible rival.

That he, Gorman, was not a benedict was not for the want of a Beatrice. He could, out of the loveliest of all the lovely women of his acquaintance, have picked his choice. Ever since he had returned from the Univer-

sity a dashing young Bachelor of Arts, he had been the object of all the scheming mammas as well as the craze of all the giddy young ladies. That none had captured him was less their fault, either of charms or of effort, than the fault of his own perverse fancy. None had yet been able to touch that tender spot, which we are to suppose is to be found in every manly heart. The one who did touch it would certainly be his wife, for surely no woman, heart-whole and fancy free, could resist the blandishments of such a man. All these things David Winston knew, for they had been friends since boyhood, and now to be told that she, the peerless woman who was so much and yet so little to him; so near and yet so far away, and in whose presence he was henceforth to stand a moral pariah, was the one woman who had touched that exclusive heart; the one woman in all the wide, wide world whom Jake Gorman had determined to marry, was to be told that the future was to hold nothing of love; life nothing of sweetness for him, and that all through the dreary way he must walk through darkness and tread upon ashes.

Little wonder, then, was it, that the thought sobered him, and that the pleasing lines of his handsome face were often knit

into ugly frowns. But he was no coward, no weakling in moral stamina, albeit, he did waver once in cowardly indecision, as he debated the propriety of resigning his place in congress and hurrying abroad to find her, and, all unworthy as he was, to force himself into her presence, and upon her life, to claim and to seize her as his own, and to trust to a lifetime of tenderness to win back her respect, if not her love.

“But, no,” he murmured, sadly, after the struggle had ended and his manliness had conquered, “I have no right to trouble her ever again. If Jake loves her, as I am sure he must love her, he will win her love, and she will be happy. It is her right to love and be loved, and Jake Gorman, much as I find myself beginning to hate him, will perhaps make her a good husband. Confound him! I could call him out. But no, I shall not interfere, but will take all the blame upon myself and have the courts to release her whenever she asks it.”

And thus resolved, he put his foot firmly down upon it and addressed himself with redoubled zeal to his public duties.

It was nearly a month before he heard anything further from Miss Pauline Graves, and then his sister only sent him an extract

from her last letter. It was to the point and read as follows :

“ Well, after doing his level best, looking his sweetest, dressing his neatest, wasting a mill-pond full of perfume, and aided and abetted by mamma, Sue, and me putting in a good word every chance we got, poor Uncle Jake has got it at last ; the most complete and flattest sit-down upon you ever saw, and now he is the most utterly flabbergasted old bachelor you ever heard of in all your life. It is really pitiful to see him. It was so unexpected you see. It was his first, and I am sure it will be his last, for he really loved the lady, as well he may, for a more lovely and lovable woman I never saw. .

I do wish that you could see her, as I did the other day, as, all unbeknown to her I watched her sitting in her cool summer dress looking through the window, away out over the fields as if her thoughts had crossed the wide ocean in search of a truant sweetheart, or else a runaway husband. I wondered if she wasn't thinking of ' the late lamented,' and I thought then that it was a bad sign for Uncle Jake. But her conduct throughout the whole matter has been very nice, and as proper as proper could be, just such as one might expect from a high-born, true-hearted lady. She did not court his attentions, but was only glad to see us all because we were Americans and from the South, but she had no more idea of Uncle Jake's courting her than she had of mamma herself. It was only when he began to let his little sighs pop out, and to wall his eyes up to the ceiling when she sang for us that she began to smell a mouse, and then you ought to have seen the way she hauled in her horns and crawled back in her shell like a scared snail. Uncle Jake thought that it was only a little coquettish *finesse* she was practicing to toll him on, so he bristled up the bolder, and giving me the wink yesterday to get out of the room, he hemmed her in a corner and went down on his knees in cavalier style and popped the question straight out (I was

peeping all the while through the key-hole), but, alas for Uncle Jake, it was no go, and now we are all in a hurly-burly packing up to get away. Uncle Jake is not mad, but like the ghost in Hamlet he wears a sorrowing countenance. He thinks that it is all because of the Count that she kicked him. A Count Pacetti, a rich nobleman, who, it is said, is negotiating with the American Consul for her hand, and it is this that cuts him, but he does not blame her, only I would be sorry for Uncle Jake to meet him, for I am sure he would spit in his face. He is desperate enough for anything."

"This," added Augusta, in her letter, "is all she says about it, and so you see it all turns out just as I told you so. If she ever marries again it will be to some count, or earl, or duke, or maybe a prince, who will give her the social distinction she deserves. She is fitted to shine in any court, and I do not blame her for aspiring to its honors, only I could just choke you for letting her go. Babie has three more teeth and is just as sweet as he can be. I started to read your speech, and was very proud of it, but babie jerked it out of my hands and tore it into shreds. He is just the cutest little fellow you ever saw. Papa got a letter from Grace herself, yesterday, asking his advice about selling her house on Colbert Avenue, and the furniture, so you see that she has no idea of ever coming back again, and I just bet you anything that Uncle Jake is right about that Count. Only think of Grace as the Countess Pacetti! I catch myself courtesying to her. Babie can say ma-ma and pa-pa just as plain as anything. It would be too bad, wouldn't it? I mean to have her to marry away over there and to be lost to us forever. It would be something to be proud of though, wouldn't it? to have a countess, a real, live countess for a sister-in-law. But, oh! I forgot; she would not be my sister-in-law any longer, would she? That is too bad! Babie says 'Peet e boo.' She also told papa that if he could do so, without embarrassing the bank here, to withdraw all her deposits and transfer them to the Bank of Charleston. That looks suspicious, too, don't it?

Either Mr. Whiting is working his 'rabbit-foot' on her to get to handle her money, or else she has an eye on something else. At any rate, papa thinks that it means a winding up of her business here for good and all, and so does Walter. But, here comes babie, and I must take him for a romp.

"Your loving sister,

"AUGUSTA V. GRAVES.

"P.S.—Babie sends a kiss."

What a spiteful thing it was in David Winston to so exult over the discomfited suit of his quondam friend. But he did exult, fairly chuckled in savage delight, as he kicked off his slipper in the execution of an involuntary war dance. And yet David Winston was not a heartless man.

"Oh! she refused him. Of course she did. I was a fool for ever fearing anything else, and Jake was a fool for trying it. Ha-ha! poor fellow—flabbergasted! Yes, that's the word. What a clever little philologist Miss Pauline must be to pick out such an expressive word. She deserves an academy medal. Flabbergasted. Ha-ha! I should say he was. Poor Jake! How art the mighty fallen! *Sic transit gloria mundi*. But, my dear Jake, you should have known better!" and for the first time in many a weary day, David Winston dropped back in his chair and laughed a soft, deep, self-satisfied and

self-satisfying laugh. "But, oh, hell! Ah! I mean hello. What is this infernal nonsense about a count? Let me see, what it is she says," sobering up a little at the recollection. "The Countess Pacetti. Babie can say—Damn it all, who cares what the baby says? Let me see what Pauline says. Gussie is so full of babies that she don't know what she is talking about. Ah! yes, here is what Pauline says. 'He thinks that it is all because of the count that she kicked him. A Count Pacetti, who, it is said, is negotiating with the American Consul for her hand.' Humph! That's all nonsense. The American Consul has no more to do with her hand than I have. It may be, though, that she has referred the matter of marriage settlements to the Consul for advice, and if so, there is something serious in it. 'And it is this that cuts him. But he does not blame her, only I should be sorry for Uncle Jake to meet him, for I am sure he would spit in his face, for he is desperate enough for anything.' Good! Godspeed the meeting. How I wish I was there to see it well done. There would be but little left of the count, for Jake is a dead shot. But, pooh! why should I care? It is no quarrel of mine. Heigh-ho! I wish it was; somehow I feel that I

should like to exchange compliments with the count myself. Well, well, perhaps I shall. It would be more manly than to stand by and see the generous, big-hearted Jake do it for me. And, by Jove, I will. I shall start this very night. I shall go and end the matter at once. Better to be killed at a blow than to live on such "a life as mine," and could he, on the spur of that moment, have stood face to face with the Count Pacetti, it would have been short shrift for one or both of them.

But before the night came he had had time for more sober reflection, and with the sober thought came a sense of his folly, and dismally murmuring, "It is none of my business. I have no right to interfere. I am nothing to her, and if she prefers this count to, honest Jake Gorman or to myself, it is her own affair," and to fortify himself for the day's debate he had to shut out all further thought of the matter and address himself to the weightier affairs of state.

And so time went on, as time is bound to go. The excitement of the short but bitter session was closed by the enthusiasm of the presidential inauguration, and Winston returned to his cases in the summer and fall courts, sufficiently freed from his own in-

dividual cares, to acceptably look after the legal and illegal cares of his clients.

The autumn came again after a while, and nestling in it, the sober month of October, bringing with it the third anniversary of his marriage. Three years wedded, and in all that time not one loving word to or from the woman he had married ; not one kiss from the sweetest lips that ever smiled upon a husband's devotion. He was twenty-five then, he was twenty-eight now, sober, settled and staid. Home, desolate as it was to his life, was the one spot dearer than all others in the world to him. How his heart would have blessed the wifely presence that could have presided over that home ; and how his heart did long, with a nameless yearning, for such a vivifying presence !

Through his father, to whom she wrote on business, he had heard from his wife at long intervals, each succeeding interval becoming longer as time seemed to be widening the distance between her and her interest here. Of the Count Pacetti, he heard nothing more save the little gossip account Miss Pauline Graves gave on her return from their travels. It was curious how eagerly he listened to that young lady's spirited recital of the Florentine episode, as

she dwelt with loving enthusiasm upon the marvelous beauty and sweetness of the lady, and winding up always, with a sigh of pity for poor Uncle Jake, and a pretty tilt of the nose at the assurance of the count.

He wondered at her delay in not asking for her divorce, but he felt that it was but a delay, tantalizing indeed to him, but a delay against which he could not in decency protest. For himself he could not ask one, for he would never need one. Hungry as his heart longed for wifely love and a wife's sympathy, he had no thought of ever marrying again. The bare suggestion of such a possibility would have flushed his cheek with anger. Had the fair hand of the Princess Alice of England been offered him in marriage he would have rejected the offer in indignant scorn.

Then why, we wonder, did he not seek a reconciliation with his wife, the woman who, though unseen and so far away, had, with a subtle psychological alchemy, almost magical, transmuted the bitter ashes of his hate and scorn into golden links of the sweetest affection ; drawing him closer and stronger and tighter day by day to her, whom he now loved with a love that would not permit any other ! Ah, why ! Who can account

for the perversity of the human mind? One to know, would have to put one's-self in his place, and then perhaps would have been no nearer the solution, for it is extremely doubtful if the poor fellow himself could have told.

But while the October brought round another anniversary of his wedding morn, it had been kinder still to his gentle sister Augusta, and brought to her and her happy lord another baby.

Little David, now in kilts and Sunday pants, had been turned over to Mammy Kate, and a little sister was now the "tweet-est, darlingest 'ittle sing" in all the world to its happy mother.

And it happened that on this, the black-letter day of his life, David Winston had called to congratulate his sister, and to see the new baby. Perhaps it was thinking of the day that made him so sober, and made his kiss so tender as he stooped to greet his sister.

The baby was fished up from its nest in the crib and, not so gingerly as the little David had been two years before, it was unwrapped and placed in "Unky Davy's" arms for inspection and admiration. Uncle David was no connoisseur in babies, but he

had the good taste to see that this was a remarkably fine child, and the still better taste to declare it.

"Why, Gussie, it is really a pretty baby."

"Yes, indeed it is; the sweetest little precious, and baby wants its Uncle David to name it. Will you name the baby, brother?"

"Ah, well! I am not much on names, but suppose we call it James Buchanan?"

"Mercy me! the idea!" with a positive shock.

"It's not that kind of a cat," laughed Walter.

"Oh! It's a girl is it? Ah, then I didn't know. Yes, I see now, it's too pretty for a boy. Well, sister, may I name her?" soberly.

"Certainly, I wish you to."

"Then, sister, I name her Abigail——"

"Great Jehoshaphat," involuntarily protested the father.

"Yes! Abigail," stooping and kissing the little face with a reverence that sobered Walter, and silenced all opposition.

"You name her for Grace? Yes, she shall be named Abigail," said the mother, "Grace Abigail, and we will call her Abigail."

And the next Sunday, when they went to church, and Uncle David stood sponsor at the font, the baby was christened Grace Abigail, and from that moment there seemed to be a silent blessing stealing in and softening the heart of the godfather.

And, having named the baby, the young statesman went back to Washington to plunge again into the whirlpool of politics on Capitol Hill.

The session that followed was a long and troubled one, and June came, to find the Congress still behind with the appropriation bills. The debate on the Kansas-Nebraska bill still held the House, and day by day vituperative hate was busily sowing the seeds that were soon to spring up, like dragons' teeth, to ripen into disunion, war, bloodshed, and ruin.

It was a day of unusual interest in the House. Two of the gladiatorial giants were to meet in the arena and tear each other to pieces for the delectation of the galleries. Every available seat in the hall and the lobbies were filled and the galleries were literally packed.

The debate was opened by the gentleman from Borealis, who, with an eloquence worthy a better cause, pictured the "brutal, domi-

neering principle of the slave-ocracy—its aggressive greed for territory, its aristocratic thirst for power and dominion,” and denouncing the Constitution of the Government itself, which gave life and right to such a system, as “A covenant with death and a league with hell”; and appealing, in an eloquent peroration, amid the drunken applause of party friends, from such a covenant to that “Higher Law” to which the poorest slave, writhing under the brutal lash of the beastly driver, had the heaven-born right to appeal.

To this lava-burst of seething eloquence, glistening like liquid silver, but reeking with the sulphurous fumes of treason itself, Winston replied.

With an outpour of eloquence equally as thrilling, and perhaps equally as intemperate, he repelled the charges of domineering aggression against his section and against his party; and then, in the burning, blistering words of a Cicero denouncing the treason of a Cataline, he denounced the gentleman’s blasphemous arraignment of the Constitution of the land, and his fanatical threat of appealing to the “Higher Law” for the redress of “a grievance that rankles only in an imagination grown morbid in its impotent hate,

and desperate in the frenzy of spiteful bigotry."

The speech was a masterful one, and it was several minutes, even after he had taken his seat, before the applause of his friends on the floor and the wild flutter of handkerchiefs and sparkling *vivas* in the gallery could allow the Speaker's desperate pounding for order to be heard.

"Ah! Winston," cried a senator, who had come across from the other chamber to hear; "Ah! Winston, I must congratulate you. Your effort was more than grand—it was sublime. I must thank you for it."

"Yes," said another, "I do not think that there is another man in the Capitol who could have made such a speech. The shade of Cicero itself must have hovered over and inspired you."

"It is *the* speech of the session," said a brother member, crowding forward and grasping his hand. "Even the opposition was thrilled, and the galleries, they were uncontrollable. I never before saw such wild enthusiasm. And, by Jupiter! Winston, just look! What a glorious woman! There in the front row in the members' gallery. She is looking direct at you now. That Madonna face! Was ever such beauty seen

before? A bright, particular star! May it not be a happy conjunction? Venus and Jupiter! The Venus of the gallery and the Jupiter Tonans of the floor. Look!"

Winston looked, more to divert the volubility of his friend from himself than for any curiosity he felt for the beauty.

But one glance sufficed to transfix his soul. His heart almost cried out in the heavenly surprise that overwhelmed it as he looked for the first time in his life directly in the sweet face of his wife. He did not recognize her as his wife, as Abigail Hardie, the girl whom he had married. Had he done so, the shock would have unmanned him. He only saw and recognized in her the queen of all women—the one woman in all the world who, despite the claims of any other, was to be to him his sweetest joy or his bitterest sorrow.

She was looking at him; indeed, from the time she had taken her seat there, sandwiched so closely between Mr. Whiting and his wife, to listen to the eloquence of which they had heard so much, she had not for an instant taken her eyes from his face; and now, when she caught his unexpected glance, and the surprised look of wondering admiration that filled his eye, she instinctively raised her hands, in the wild impulse to reach

out her arms to him. But the impulse was hushed back almost as soon as it was inspired, as a touch and whispered admonition from her companion recalled her to herself, and, in blushing confusion, she dropped her hands as quickly as she had raised them.

But the quick eye of the voluble gentleman noted the movement, and he rallied his friend :

“Ah, Winston ! you have certainly made a mash. That is, unless you already know the lady. See, she opened her arms like a hen spreading her wings to take home the little chick. If her name be Barkus, I should certainly say that she was willin’. Do you know her ?”

“No, I have no idea who she may be. I only know that such loveliness is too pure to be lightly spoken of. I had as soon revile the beauty of the Holy Virgin,” he answered quickly.

“Oh, you mistake me if you suspect an innuendo in my remarks or in my thoughts. I recognized her surprising loveliness, and I can stand uncovered in its presence, but for all that I love to look upon her. It is like looking at a beautiful picture. I should like to find out who she is or where she is from.

There is no sacrilege in that, is there?" a little touchily.

"Oh, no! nor did I intend my remark as a reproof. I was only trying to voice my own feelings. The impression she has made upon me is so strangely different from anything that has ever touched me before. But let us go out. I am completely exhausted. There is nothing more to be done to-day."

"Yes, only I have a letter or two to frank. I will meet you in the corridor. By the way, do you go to the opera to-night? It is said to be very good."

"Yes, I have an engagement with Miss Stanley;" and with another glance at the gallery he adjusted his papers and left the hall.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS M'FLIMSY TELLS AN OPEN SECRET.

It was a brilliant opera, and a brilliant audience assembled to listen. The beauty and fashion of the proud Capitol were out in butterfly array, and the proudest capital in Europe might well have been proud of the brilliancy of this.

David Winston was not a fashionable man, in the social acceptation of the word. Sympathetic and genial in his nature, he was a favorite at his club; but in the *salon* he was hardly known. Society had seen but little of him, and it was but recently that it had seen even that little.

To Miss Stanley, the senator's pretty and dashing daughter, was accredited the honor of bringing out this untamed lion of the House, and to her busy rumor had accredited the still happier distinction of putting other than social leading strings upon him.

Their appearance together this evening, she so radiant in smiles and beauty, and he so fresh from the scene of his acknowledged triumph, gave piquancy to the gossip as well as interest to the couple, and of course they were the observed of all observers.

Quite by chance (Query: Is there such a thing as chance?), and with not the remotest idea of seeing "the lady and the lion," Whiting and his party, now reduced by the marriage of Miss Whiting to the Count Pacetti, to three, had taken seats at the opera, and were expecting a rare musical treat, when the entrance of the distinguished couple created a sensible flutter in the audience.

“That is the Honorable Mr. Winston, the wonderful young orator,” said a lady, who was evidently on familiar terms with all the social celebrities of the Capitol, explaining to her escort, a rural cousin from the Blue-grass regions, who had ventured up to the city to see the lions. “And that lady with him is Miss Stanley; the rich daughter of Senator Stanley. They are sweethearts, and are to be married, you know, as soon as Congress adjourns. They would have been married before now only he has just got his divorce——”

“His divorce? Does a man have to have a divorce to get married here?” innocently asked the rustic cousin.

“Yes! married ones do. You see he was already married and had some trouble with his wife, a poor giddy creature, whom it is said he married for her money, and who paid him off by running away with a scamp from Charleston two days after the wedding, and he has not seen her since. Cousin Matilda happened to hear all about it when she was down South and she told me. However, it is quite well understood here, and every body has been very sorry for the poor fellow, and all feel very glad now of his good fortune in winning Miss Stanley. She is

immensely rich too, and oh ! my ! isn't she pretty ! And what a *distingue* couple they make. He is so handsome too. Everybody in the house is looking at them and admiring. She ought to be very proud, and I am sure she is. I almost wish it was me."

"Well ! I don't so very well know. I believe I had rather it was not me. I don't think that if I was a girl I should care to pick up a second-hand fellow like him. A sure-enough widower, is bad enough, but when it comes to a grass widower I should beg to be excused ; but they are a good-looking team, sure enough. She's as pretty as a picture, and I had much rather have her than to have him."

"What is it, Grace ? Are you ill ?" asked Mrs. Whiting in alarm, as she noticed the sudden gasp for breath and the paleness that overspread the face of her companion.

"Oh ! It is the odor of these jessamines. I must throw them away. There, I feel better already," as she dropped the innocent flowers and instinctively drew herself further away from the unconscious (and unconscionable) gossip, who had been splitting her ears with her sharp tongue. She had heard every word of the cruel scandal,

and had to sit dumb, without the poor privilege of screaming while the iron was entering her soul. She had not followed the direction of the curious eyes, and had not noticed the entrance of the couple, and now she was afraid to trust herself to look, but had to sit with eyes drooped in her lap, as if all that glitter and glare of beauty was too dazzling for her sight.

The opera had no charm, no interest, for her. She did not even hear it, and it was only when the curtain had fallen on the first act that she realized from the succeeding hush that it had ever commenced.

"There," spoke up her gossipy neighbor again, as the hush in the music gave voice to her tongue, "there that is the Honorable Mr. Fenton, of Boomtown, who is talking to Winston now. And look; they are looking this way now. I wonder if it is me they are looking at. O! mercy! Miss Stanley is adjusting her glass! and now she is leveling it directly at me. Is it some one behind us or is it me! Can you see who is behind us? And now the gentlemen are both looking! See how they stare! I do wonder if it is me, anyhow I intend to shoot back," and adjusting her glasses, the lady defiantly returned the fire from the battery

of glasses leveled from the opposite circle, while poor Grace sat still as death and almost as cold.

“Yes, it’s me. I caught Miss Stanley’s very eye and made her drop it. I wonder what it is they are saying about me? I shall bone Mr. Fenton about it to-morrow. I’ve a great mind to shake my finger at him now.”

“I’ll bet a thrip against a ginger-cake that it’s something complimentary. See how the young lady arches her brows and turns up her nose, as much as to say ‘what shocking taste,’ ” said the rural escort, with more justice, perhaps than he thought.

For this is what the gentlemen were saying :

(FENTON :—as he crossed over and joined his friends) Ah ! Winston ! yonder is the star of the Gallery again.

WINSTON (with alert interest) :—Where?

FENTON :—To the left, fourth seat on seventh row, next to Miss McFlimsy.

WINSTON :—Ah ! lovely enough for any star ; but this is hardly the same. She was a Madonna ! this is Venus herself.

FENTON :—So I thought, until I caught her *vis-a-vis*, and then I found it the same. Now ! she slightly turns this way !

did you ever see such a remarkable and perplexing beauty ?

WINSTON :—Wonderful ! wonderful ! Miss Stanley, do you wish to see a living, breathing, impersonation of Venus ?

Miss Stanley adjusts her glass and levels it across the parquette. Her aim strikes Miss McFlimsy squarely between the eyes.

FENTON :—Is she not divine ?

MISS STANLEY :—Perhaps so ! my glasses are not always reliable.

FENTON :—There ! she is looking towards you. You can catch a front view of her, and now you have Venus no longer, but the pathetic loveliness of Murillo's Madonna.

Then it was that Miss Stanley's eyebrows arched and her pretty nose curled, as a discriminating nose surely had the right to curl in piquant disgust at such a preposterous optical illusion.

WINSTON (starting up from a strangely puzzling wonder, which had carried him away across the sea) :—Fenton, can you possibly find out for me who she is ?

FENTON :—Yes, I think so. I saw Milnes talking with the gentleman with her, to-day, and they appeared to be old friends. They are from Charleston—I overheard enough for that. They are stopping at the National.

WINSTON :—At the National ! Are you sure ?

FENTON :—Yes ! quite sure. Milnes called there to see them.

WINSTON :—Then I am in luck.

Miss Stanley's nose had to take another little tilt, but it was such a saucy and withal such a pretty tilt that Fenton smiled to see it.

FENTON :—" I do not know so much about that. The lady is his wife."

WINSTON, (starting aghast at the idea) :—His wife ? Oh, no !

FENTON :—Yes, but she is. I heard him tell Milnes that his wife was with him, and I observed them sitting together to-day in the gallery, and I saw him grasp her arm and jerk it down, when she spread them out to hover you. I am sure they are married or he would be more gallant in his attentions, to her. He didn't fan her one time to-day, warm as it was ; and to-night, see he is twice as attentive to the lady with her. Yes, you may rest assured that she is his wife. But, say ! is it quite understood that we are to go to Mount Vernon to-morrow—eh, Miss Stanley ?"

MISS STANLEY :—Yes ; that is the programme.

WINSTON : — Certainly ; there will be

nothing in the House to-morrow. Bangem and Woolem will consume the day in battering the Queen's English over each other's heads. And, besides, I am anxious to show Miss Stanley Lady Washington's roses.

MISS STANLEY:—Is it lawful to pluck one? Else you should not lead me into temptation.

FENTON:—Give Winston a leaf and he will defend the trespass.

WINSTON:—I shall be happy to share the consequences, in any event.

And, with this gallant speech to placate the uptilted nose, a satisfied smile, stretching the pretty mouth, drew it down again.

To-morrow would be the twenty-fourth, St. John's day, and was to be celebrated by the Masonic fraternity by a steamboat excursion down the river and picnic at Mount Vernon, the home of that eminent patron of the craft. Both these gentlemen were enthusiastic members of the fraternity, and both were anxious for a little whiff of fresh country air.

FENTON:—Then we all go. I will see to the tickets. The boat leaves at ten, sharp. I will call for you, Miss Stanley. *Au revoir,*" hurrying back to his seat as the bell rang.

Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling went the bell ; the orchestra blared, up rose the curtain, and Fra Diavolo commenced his mischievous work again, cutting throats and turning pretty heads.

But neither the devilish exploits of Fra Diavolo, nor the charming music, nor even the pretty, plump, round arms of the *prima donna* (so fascinating to the robbers hid in the closet), as she disrobed for her couch, could further interest Winston. He had no further thought for clever acting, no ear for music nor eye for surreptitious charms, but sat ungallantly stolid and neglectful even of the beauty so close to his side, casting stolen glances of reverential admiration across the parquette at that lovely face, which had so mysteriously hypnotized his every thought.

Miss Stanley noticed the undutiful aberration, but reassuring herself, by another inspection through her glass, of the harmless face of Miss McFlimsy, she only laughed at it as a wayward fancy, for which he would be only too glad to atone to-morrow.

After a while—it seemed an interminable age to Grace—the curtain fell, and, through the rush and jam of the exit, they made their way out into the glad, free night again.

“Let us walk,” she said, as Whiting

paused for a carriage. "I think the walk in the air will do me good."

"Yes ; we will walk. 'Tis but a little way up the avenue."

"Ah, Whiting, I have been looking for you all the evening," said the Hon. Porcher Milnes, as he met the returning party in the hotel corridor.

"Have you ? Well, I am glad to meet you. And here, I must introduce you to my wife. Mr. Milnes, Mrs. Whiting," presenting, in a kind of husbandly complacency, his rosy-cheeked wife.

"I am happy to meet Mrs. Whiting," accepting with a courtly grace the lady's friendly hand.

"And this is our very dear friend, Mrs. Winston," continued Whiting, presenting the young lady.

"Ah, this is an additional pleasure," bowing and then addressing Mrs. Whiting, as they entered the parlor. "You have been to the opera ? I hope you had a pleasant evening ?"

"Oh, yes, it was really fine—the opera I mean. The music was charming and the audience very brilliant. I spent a most enjoyable evening," answered the lady.

"And you, Mrs. Winston, I hope that the taste you have had of foreign music will not destroy your relish for our more democratic opera," turning to the younger lady and trying to be polite without any definite idea of what he was meaning to say.

"Oh, no, sir; my democratic tastes are too deeply ingrained for a foreign flavor to affect. But, sir, there was nothing American about the opera this evening. Indeed, sir, before we hedge ourselves too exclusively in our democratic tastes, we should remember that we have nothing to feed them on. I do not think, sir, that we have such a thing as an American opera."

"Oh, is that so? Well, well! I hadn't thought of that. But we've got the minstrels and that, to my taste, is much better. The Chrysties are inimitable. Eh, what say you?"

"I am hardly so democratic. But some of their songs are really charming," she answered.

"That they are. But what was the play to-night?"

"Oh, sir, I really do not remember, but—but I—I believe it was Faust," trying in vain to recall the opera.

"Oh, yes, of Guttenberg, the old printer,

a very remarkable man. Well, I am glad that you liked it, and that you enjoyed the evening. We wish all our friends to enjoy their visits to the city. We want them to think well of the capitol. And, Mrs. Whiting, I trust that you will pardon me for the presumption, but I have ventured to arrange a little entertainment for to-morrow, which I am sure you will enjoy, eh, Whiting?"

"To-morrow? We expect to leave for Richmond to-morrow."

"Yes, I know you had, but an accident to the railroad, a bridge out of line, or something of the sort, will prevent a train to-morrow and knocks your programme into a cocked hat. I learned it at the ticket-office this evening, and so felt at liberty to take you in hand. And to make the delay as pleasant to your ladies as possible, I have secured tickets to an excursion to-morrow to Mt. Vernon. We will be sure of a pleasant time; the boat is large and commodious, the music will be fine, the scenery charming and there will not be an overcrowd. It is a Masonic affair, and the company will be select. Mrs. Milnes is going, and she begs me particularly to secure you if possible. She called herself to make your acquaint-

ance and to ask you to join us, but you were out. Now, will you go?"

"If Grace—Mrs. Winston—will go I should be charmed with the honor."

"Then, Miss Winston, I appeal to you."

"You are very kind, sir, and I accept your kindness. I have long wished to visit Mount Vernon."

"I am sure you will enjoy it; for, aside from the enjoyment of the excursion, the pleasurable associations of the place will make it a day long to be remembered. But it is not too late," consulting his watch, "it is only eleven-thirty, for a *petite souper*; one needs something after the fatigue of the theater. May I order one?"

"Not for me, please," said Grace, who longed for nothing in the world so much as she longed for the rest and solitude of her own room.

"Nor for me,—thanks. You must know, Mr. Milnes, that we are almost rustic in our habits, and it will not do for us to plunge too deeply at once into fashionable dissipation. A good sleep, now, will be the best refreshment we could take," smilingly supplemented Mrs. Whiting.

"Ah, yes, there will be less headache

about it in the morning. And as we have to be up early to catch the boat, I will, with your kind permission, wish you pleasant dreams and a very good-night."

"Good-night, sir, we shall be ready," and with friendly nods the ladies withdrew.

"Winston—Winston," murmured the gentleman to himself, as he went out on his way home. "I wonder who she is! A splendid woman, certainly, regal in her beauty as well as manner. I do not think I ever saw a lovelier."

The struggle that night in the mind of David Winston was the bitterest of his life. A struggle between loyalty to the wife he had discarded and the subtle, mysterious and undefinable infatuation that possessed his soul for this strange woman who had so suddenly come between them.

Through all these weary days of hopeless, purposeless waiting he had been true to the absent one, in thought and indeed, not even in vagrant fancy had his thoughts ever turned from her for one idle moment, but in its most chaste and immaculate sense had his heart remained steadfastly faithful and true. Notwithstanding the idle gossip to which he was disdainfully indifferent, the

idea of marrying any other woman had never entered his mind. He could have released her from all allegiance and from all duty to himself—he could claim nothing from her—but in his own soul he recognized no other mistress but her. Had he even thought it best for her happiness that she should marry some one else, he could have ground his heart to powder, dry as summer dust, and given his consent, but as for himself, until death itself came between them, there could be no dissolution of the ties that bound him to her. But now, like a meteor-flash a thwart the inky darkness of a midnight sky, this other came, this beautiful one, this goddess stepping from the clouds and compelling his adoration. The sense of his unfaith to his wife was revolting to every sense of his manhood, and he cursed himself for his baseness. He tried to reason with himself, in his desperate effort to arrest his perfidy, but the power of ratiocination was gone. In an agony of despairing shame he would clutch his breast, as if to pluck from his heart the beautiful image that had so incontinently possessed it, but he could only torture the quivering flesh, that beautiful image had, with a kodak flash, been photographed in indelible lines in its most secret

and sacred depths. He would for a moment think sadly of her, the sweet wife, who had really made him what he was, only to turn, the next, with something nearly akin to hate in his heart against her, to clasp and hug to his soul the beautiful vision that had so dazzled his senses.

For more than an hour he sat in the solitude of his room, pondered the matter over and over again, commencing by cursing himself for a villain and ended by blessing the loveliness that was leading him astray. At last to put an end to the distracting struggle, he started up.

"Ah," he cried, "this must end it ; I am too vile even to think of her ever again. My love, could I recall it again, would be an insult to her purity, and I shall end it now and forever," and then turning to his desk he wrote :

"MISS HARDIE :—There is a point in the descent to perdition at which decency halts. I have passed that point, and am now beyond the pale of womanly sympathy. The name I imposed upon you is no longer worthy your purity, and I write to notify you that I shall take immediate steps to absolve you from it. If you can trust me so far, I shall see that your interest, in all particulars, are protected, and that with the decree that divorces your life from such a wretch, you will be reinvested with all your maiden rights, including the name your worthy father made so honorable.

Should it embarrass you to write, you need not do so, as I shall accept your silence as an evidence of your consent, and will proceed accordingly.

“With the sincerest respect I am

“Your unworthy friend,

“DAVID ROE WINSTON.”

Having finished he hurried down to the hotel office and mailed it, and returning to his room, he went to bed only to commence the struggle again, keeping it up until exhausted nature could stand no more, and he dropped to sleep. And then came,

“Swift-footed visions, without order or number,”

through which floated in a halo of glory the angelic figure, form and face of the temptress, wooing his sleeping senses with the pathetic sweetness of the Madonna, and enchanting his soul with the piquant beauty of Venus.

Was it sinful, such an ecstatic dream? Surely it could not be; and yet he had to despise himself the next morning for recalling with such ecstatic delight, the memory of the kisses he had so rapturously imprinted upon the sweet, sweet mouth, as he held the beatified vision in his dreaming arms.

And poor Grace, she had a struggle too,

not so remorseful, but none the less painful. There were no self-reproaches, mingled with her silent sobs. It was only over her wounded, bleeding, dying love she was so piteously moaning, only for the crumbling of her lordly idol she was grieving. She had clung to that love, hopeless as it was, as long as she could ; she had worshiped that idol, with a woman's constant adoration, but now they must both be put away, that sweet love and that god-like image. He was no longer hers ; he was soon to be the lord of another, and it would be a sin to love him. Had he remained single all his life she would have continued to love him, though the Arctic seas might have rolled between them, but now he was to marry another and she must give up the love that had been all along such a silent joy to her life.

But, as we have seen before, Abigail Hardie was a brave woman, and, with a prayer for strength, she arose to put the weakness away ; and like he, the faithless spouse, had done, she turned to her desk, late as it was, and wrote a long letter, too long to give here, but of which she told her friend, the next morning. And this is what she told :

“I thought much last night, Alice, of what would be best for me to do, and I have

quite decided. Hush, let me tell you. What I heard last night has convinced me of the folly of longer struggling with a preposterous hope. He is to marry the beautiful lady we saw him with. He is already divorced, and it is sinful in me to ever think of him as my own again. I must give my duty to some one else, and perhaps with that I may be able to give my love. I gave him up last night. How much it cost me no one can ever know ; but to make the sacrifice complete, to put an end, at once and forever, to my wavering doubts, and fears and hopes, I have written to Lord Knightleigh, explaining everything, and telling him that if he thinks me worth the voyage across the Atlantic, to come and I will marry him. This I will do to save me from myself. I will make him a true and faithful wife, and in doing that I will, perforce, learn to forget that I was ever, even in thought, the wife of another."

"Ah, darling, you have decided well, wisely and well. Sir Robert is in every respect an admirable gentleman, and I am sure that he loves the very ground you walk upon. But come, hurry up and dress ; we have barely time for breakfast, before it will be time to go."

“Yes, you run on, and I will soon be ready.”

But when left alone to herself, and she turned to seal and stamp the letter for the post, before going, there came over her soul such a rush of feeling, pity, sorrow, doubt, shame and remorse, that she threw the treacherous missive aside in horror, and sinking on her knees and burying her face in her hands she sobbed :

“No, no, I cannot, oh, I cannot ! It was mine to love him first. In the sight of God I am his wife still, and I shall love him on until death do us part. Oh ! how wicked, almost vile it was in me to waver for a moment in my duty ! Oh, God forgive me ! My love, my love ! No divorce, no decree of man, can absolve me from the vows I took in the presence of the most high God. No, no, whatever may betide I shall remain true to my love, and true to myself because true to my love.”

CHAPTER XVII.

DOWN THE RIVER.

THE weather that morning was propitious. Had St. John himself had the tempering of the air, or the softening of the sunlight, he could not have made it more balmy, soft and charming than it was. It was a revivifying inhalation of health, of strength, and of gladness to breathe it. Even the pain that had cut so deep in her heart, and which had kept her awake the livelong night, felt its soothing effects, and in the universal gladness poor Grace found surcease of misery, and as the steamer glided out into the broad river, with its banners waving, its music floating, and its hundred trills of human merriment filling the air, the wounded look that had so puzzled and distressed Whiting all the morning, went out from her eye and something of the old-time brightness came back again.

The pleasant run down the river had nearly been made, and another turn in the

winding stream would bring them in sight of the Mecca of all the "truly loyal," when Fenton, in a little flutter of importance accosted his friend :

"Ah ! Winston, our gallery star is still ascendant, and shines upon us again to-day. Ah, what a lucky star !"

"How ? Where ?" quickly asked Winston.

"I mean the double beauty, double and ubiquitous, the Siamese twins, if I may be so profane, of womanly beatitude ; the Madonna and Venus, both in one. There she is, across to the right, leaning against the stanchion. Milnes is talking to her, and now I can see him and find out who she is. But, there ! don't you see that Gorgon of a husband standing jealous guard over her ? Miss Stanley, don't you think her beautiful ?"

Miss Stanley looked, a little indifferently, as well as ungraciously. She cared nothing for the wonderful beauty, but she did not quite relish the gentleman's irreverent interruption.

"Oh ! But this is not the same lady we saw last evening," she cried as a glance revealed a loveliness she instinctively had to acknowledge.

"Yes, it is the self-same ; only the more lovely each succeeding time one sees her.

She looks even better by sunlight than she did by gas, and it takes a miraculous beauty to do that. Isn't she beautiful, even though she had the poor taste to throw herself away upon such an old stick-in-the-mud as that?"

"Yes; she is beautiful. She is more than that, she is transcendently lovely. I should like to know her. But I must beg your pardon, I was looking at altogether a different person last night. I must apologize for the mistake, and the violence I did your good taste," she said brightly, turning to Winston.

"Oh, yes! I was quite sure that you did not see aright. One could not well look in that face without acknowledging its loveliness. It strangely touched me when I first saw it, and the puzzle has not yet quite left me. I am glad, though, that she is married," he added reflectively, more to himself than to his companion.

"Yes, such loveliness should have a home to adorn," she answered demurely.

"Only she should not have wasted it on such a clown as that. I almost hate him," savagely put in Fenton. "I am sure that he thinks more of his cotton bags than he does of her. And see! he has been flirting with that other one all the way. I caught him squeezing her hand just now."

“But may be *she* is his wife, and not the other, this Siamese twins of yours.”

“And they still in the honeymoon? Not likely. Her bonnet is too badly battered for that. And besides, who ever caught a husband squeezing his wife’s hand on the sly?”

“But, Mr. Fenton, I should like to know her. Can you manage to get Mr. Milnes to introduce us?” insisted Miss Stanley, curious to unearth the mystery.

“Oh, yes, certainly. I will see him,” and off he hurried.

“Milnes,” he said a moment after, touching that gentleman on the shoulder, as a remark from Mrs. Milnes called the young lady’s attention away, “Milnes, we are all envying you your good luck, and are on our heads to know who she is. Even the exclusive Miss Stanley is dying to know her, and to take her under her patronizing wing. Now, don’t be selfish, and give us all a chance.”

“Certainly, if the young lady will permit ; only Miss Stanley will have to spread her wings to their utmost stretch to cover the loveliness that can rival her own. I will ask her.”

“Do, if you please. But first let me ask you, is she married?”

"No, but she had better be. She is engaged. Yes ; I had it just now from my wife, who got it from Mrs. Whiting, that she is to be married to an English nobleman ; a Sir Robert, or Roger Somebody, just as soon as he comes over, and he is on his way now. I tell you this to put you on your guard."

"Thanks ! But one could afford to get scorched by such a glorious flame."

"Then, come on. Miss Winston,"—he could not get it out of his head that one so bright and fresh and rosy as she, could be anything else than miss, "Miss Winston, a very sweet lady friend of mine asks the pleasure of knowing you. May I introduce her ?"

"Oh ! yes. I shall be glad to know any of your friends."

"Thanks ! then to begin I will introduce my very dear friend and political chum, the Honorable Dawson B. Fenton ; Miss Winston."

The gentleman bowed, while the lady with a charming grace returned the courtesy.

"And I may bring my friend ?" he asked.

"If you will be so kind, sir," and he marveled at the sweetness of her voice.

"Ah ! she is gracious as she is lovely, and

her voice is sweet, even as her face," he reported as he returned to his set.

"But is she married?" asked Winston, and his heart had to stop an instant to listen for the answer.

"No, not married, but worse, she is engaged. Milnes told me, *sub-rosa*, by way of warning. She is to marry an English lord. He is on the way now. Good Lord! how I do wish the ship would sink, in the middle of the Atlantic! They are waiting here for him. They will be married at the British Legation, and of course it will be a swell wedding. But come on, I see an opening, and they are expecting us," and with this he hustled them through the crowd to the central group.

Grace had turned again to Mrs. Milnes, and together they were watching some object on the bank. She did not hear the salutations of the friend, and only turned in response to the call of Mr. Milnes, to confront the expectant strangers.

"Miss Winston, it is with very great pleasure that I present Miss Stanley."

Both ladies involuntarily gasped. There was an electric recoil in the sound of each name.

"Miss Winston," repeated the one, flushing red.

“Miss Stanley,” echoed the other, turning a little pale. But with a rare presence, and unfailing dignity of thought and gentleness of manner, she quickly added : “I am glad to meet you, and must thank you for the wish to know me.”

“And this, Miss Winston, is my political fidus Achates and the Ajax Telemons of the Democracy, the Honorable David R. Winston. Being of the same name you two should know each other.”

The feelings of the two, husband and wife thus introduced to each other by a stranger and in the presence of strangers, can hardly be described. For a moment they stood, wildly staring as if suddenly awakened from a dream, and then, when thought did come again, it required a Spartan courage in each to keep back the truth. But the lady, quickest to recover, bowed in gentle dignity and with a smile, sweet for all it cost her, she said:

“The name of Mr. Winston is not altogether unknown to me. His fame has found its way across the sea, and I have heard it there. I esteem it an honor, sir, to know you,” and again she bowed in modest courtesy.

“You are only too—too good,” was all he could find voice to stammer.

"I listened to your speech yesterday," she continued, as if wishing to relieve the pained embarrassment that was only too plainly written on his face. "I wished then to thank you for your eloquent words spoken in defense of our people. They were brave words, sir, and I do thank you."

"I appreciate your thanks, but I hardly deserve them. Still I shall always be glad that you heard me. It was the proudest effort of my life, and that you approve makes the achievement still the more pleasing," he answered, recovering something of his self-possession.

"Yes, Mr. Winston, and I must tell you, too, how glad I was that you skinned that wretched old bigot. I could see from my place in the gallery that even his rhinoceros hide squirmed and quivered at every stroke of the lash. It was well laid on and the beast deserved it," chipped in Mrs. Milnes, extending her hand in friendly congratulations.

This diversion served, at least, as a foil to the perplexed embarrassment of the party. The admirable presence of Grace, her words so sweetly spoken and seemingly artless of all design completely misled them all, and none save the two themselves, with

Whiting and his wife, had a further suspicion of their ever having seen each other before.

The solemn tolling of the bell was the signal that the steamer was passing the tomb of Washington, and in a minute more it rounded in below, and ran up to the straggling and staggering pier, where, in the rush and confusion of landing, the parties separated, each drifting off again into its own little orbit around its central sun.

In inspecting the house, with its historic odds and ends, finding an astounding dearth of interesting curiosities to wonder at, and in exploring the grounds and gardens, the day was pleasantly enough spent.

Lady Washington's roses, now in full bloom, were duly admired, but though her iconoclastic fingers were quite ready for the sacrilege, Miss Stanley received no hint that one little bud stolen by them would be worn by *him* as a precious souvenir next to his heart, and no trespass was committed. Poor lady ! she had but little encouragement for any propitiatory offering ; for despite all her little winning, witching arts she utterly failed to arouse her companion from the morose stupor into which he had so strangely fallen. He was not himself at all, and she

was piqued as well as saddened to know the cause of his gloom.

“Surely,” she murmured to herself, “it cannot be this woman who is so soon to be the wife of another. He is a man of too much character to let the passing beauty of a strange woman, an adventuress, I have no doubt, so upset him. Oh! I have it now. It is the coincidence of the names that has recalled wretched memories of his unhappy marriage. That is very sad to have such a shadow to always darken his life. Poor, dear fellow, I do pity him,” and in her pity, always charming, tender and sweet in woman, but doubly so in a pretty woman, she redoubled her efforts to chase away the shadows.

A basket lunch under the trees, each group spreading its own, rounded up the entertainment on the grounds, and then a prolonged whistle from the boat sent them all crowding aboard, and then with another burst of music from the band, the boat backed out, and rounding up the stream, the home voyage began.

The voyage began as pleasantly as did the morning's. The spacious deck below had been cleared for dancing, and with the airy strains of music to thrill, happy hearts kept

time to the tread of nimble feet. Everything was charming and everything was gladness ;

“Soft eyes spake love to eyes that spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell,”

when suddenly there came from below a sharp, wild cry of terror, followed in a second by a startled chorus of “Fire ! fire ! fire ! The Lord save us, the boat’s on fire !”

In an instant all was fright and confusion. The music hushed. The isolated couples looked at each other in a vague terror, and then clasping arms, hurried to join the scurrying mob. The little whist parties dropped the cards, to spring up and run below. The dancers paused a moment to grasp the danger, and then discarding partners, *sauve qui peut*, commenced a cowardly scramble for life.

The boat’s officers had discovered the fire first, and vainly strove to suppress it, until seeing no possible chance to save the boat the captain ordered the pilot to head for the shore, and then the startling cry went up.

It was the work of a moment to lower the boats. Five staunch life-boats ; sufficient, if order could be maintained, to serve for all. Almost as quickly as they

touched the water the boats were filled, men, women, and children clambering over each other and crowding in. Four, crowded to their utmost capacity, were filled and had just put off, when the steamer grounded in the mud, two hundred yards from the shore. The one remaining boat was already half filled and would hardly suffice for the frantic crowd that remained on the burning deck, beating each other back in the mad rush for safety.

Winston's first thought was for his wife. With eyes hungry in passionate anxiety, he had watched each boat as it filled and put off, praying, as he had never prayed before, that she might be saved ; but he had nowhere seen her. Mr. Milnes he had seen, with his wife, taking their places in the first that put off. Whiting he recognized, too, as, with his own wife lifted bodily in his arms, he beat his way forward, trampling down, as he went, a little child in his desperate rush for a place ; but nowhere was she, the one woman who must be saved, to be seen.

But, true to his trust, the first duty was to the helpless girl who clung so desperately to his arm, and, fiercely beating his way, he carried her to the boat, the last to put off. Fenton was already in.

“Here, Fenton, take care of Miss Stanley,” shaking the clinging clutch from his arm and lifting her forward.

“Yes ! oh, yes !” catching the outreaching arms and lifting her into the boat. “And you jump in ; there must be room for you, even if we have to put some one else overboard.”

“No ; I must leave her with you. I go back for my wife.”

“No, no ! Do come, for heaven’s sake ! It will be death for you to stay !” cried the young lady, finding a thought for others, now that she was assured of her own safety. “Don’t you see it will be death for you to stay ? Let her go, but do you come,” reaching out her arms in agonizing tenderness.

“Jump in, Cap’n. We’ve no time fer foolin’. I’m gwine ter shove off. The b’iler ’ill bust in a minit, an’ we’ll all be blowed ter kingdom come feet up’ards. Jump aboard, if you’re gwine ter,” ordered the mate in charge of the boat.

“But there is a lady aboard. I must find her—my wife. Wait a moment until I can run up after her ;” and, without waiting an answer, he turned to speed up the cabin steps.

“No, I can’t wait another second. Shove

off, Bullard, and bend to your oars, men ; we must hustle from here, or there won't be a piece of us left big enuff ter patch a nigger's nose," and in an instant the boat shot out, leaving the helpless man and his missing wife to their fate.

The flames had already burst through the hatches in the lower deck, and were now sweeping it from stem to stern, hissing and swirling and crackling like angry demons, while the choking, pitchy smoke was belching and curling through the saloon and cabin above.

"It may be that she is asleep in a stateroom. God help me to find her," he murmured ; and into the seething smoke he plunged, to find and save, if possible, or, if not, to perish, too.

There was more than mortal pathos in his voice as, groping his way through the blinding and smothering smoke, he wailed rather than cried :

"Abigail ! Abigail ! My wife ! my love ! If you hear, for the love of Christ come, or else call, that I may go to thee ! "

But there was no response to the agonizing call ; and, having traversed the full length of the cabin hall, kicking open, as if they had been so many paper shells, each stateroom

door, on the right and on the left, as he went, until, at last, scorched and driven by the hissing tongues of the flames themselves, as they began to thrust themselves through the cracks and crevices of the floor, he was compelled, through sheer exhaustion, to seek one more gasp of fresh air out upon the after-deck, the one only little breathing spot left of all that broad sweep of deck.

“Oh ! my darling ! my darling ! Mine—mine at last ! And now I am willing to die !” he cried, as he found her out there, driven to the uttermost verge of the deck, and standing, as if thoughtfully deliberating which to choose—the sharp, quick death by the flames, or the Lethean gloom of the dark waters below.

“Oh ! is it for me that you have come ? My God, I thank Thee ! And I, too, am willing to die !” she answered, reaching out her hands. And then, encircled in each other’s arms, heart beating against heart, lip glued to lip in one long, tender, loving kiss, all the miserable past was lifted away ; all misunderstanding, all estrangement, all doubts were cleared from their lives, and, soul melting in soul, each felt that henceforth, be it in life or be it in death, they were no longer to be divided.

For a full minute he held her there, close to his heart, each oblivious to the hissing and roaring danger that held them ; and then, lifted up by a sudden inspiration, he released her, and, gently putting her back, he cried :

“But, darling, we need not die ; I have come to save you. You must let me.”

“Yes ; life from your hands will be sweet, as death in your arms would be sweet,” she answered, calmly.

“Then, here, we have only to be brave,” seizing the cork-jackets that lay untouched around. “Fasten this around your waist—let me !” and in an instant he had a life-preserver buckled under her arms.

And then, as calmly as if disrobing for a *siesta* he threw off his coat and drew off his boots and fastened a mattress of floats around his own waist, encouragingly speaking all the while.

“I can swim, darling, and can save you. You must trust me to save you, only be brave and strong and trust me.”

“I will be brave. I am not afraid. I can and I do trust you, only this, give me one little moment, it may be our last, but I must tell you before I go, how dearly I love you ; how much my heart blesses you for coming, and how very, very happy I am.”

“And I bless you for speaking it, for I, too, am happy. It would be sweet to die, holding you thus, my own precious wife,” catching her to his heart again.

She kissed him softly, and gently putting him back, answered.

“Yes, if God wills it for us thus to die, I could wish for no happier fate than to die with your arms about me, and in death to be no more divided. But, my husband, I am ready, what is it you would have me do?”

“Yes, we have no time to lose. And now, sweet one, you must not mind, but you must divest yourself of all your superfluous skirts; you must not be encumbered with too much clothing; they will only weight you down and hinder you.”

“Ah, yes, I understand, it would be a false modesty not to know;” and turning aside she deftly discarded all her surplus drapery, blushing in true maiden modesty as she stood before him, with only her one clinging gown of summer cashmere to drape her lissome form.

“I am ready, now,” she said. “Or shall I take off my shoes?”

“No, you are safe as you are, and we have not a moment left. I will jump first, and

you must follow, only be brave. And now sweet, one more kiss. God bless you, my sweet, sweet wife," and with a kiss holy in its agony of love, he embraced her once more and then plunged in.

In an instant he arose from the water and holding up his hands cried, "Now, darling, come."

With the calm dignity of a Cæsar, drawing his robes about him to face his death, and as graceful as a Greek goddess stepping into a bath, she gathered the soft folds of her dress closely around her knees, and with a silent prayer for grace she sprang after him.

She had hardly touched the water before she felt herself upborne by the buoyant, strong hand of her husband.

Wheeling his back to her he said, his voice strong and assuring :

"Now, sweet one, you must rest your hands on my shoulders and swim on my back. This way," placing the obedient hands in position. "Hold firmly, but do not try to climb over me; never mind your body if it is under, do not try to keep it out; every pound in the air outweighs ten in the water. Do not gulp the water down, but inhale as much air as possible; keep your chest

inflated. Kick as much as you please, but do not try to pull up with your hands. Ah, now, you have only to be brave and collected and I will save you," and with vigorous strokes from his strong arms he launched out into the current.

Luckily the tide was running out and a strong current was sweeping by, and a few strokes carried him beyond the scorching breath of the flames.

He soon found, however, that the current set strongly to the opposite shore, fully a mile away. He tried to steer for the nearer bank, but the cross-current was too strong and he gave it up. By floating with the current and buoyed up by the cork jackets he could swim for hours, and yielding to its drift he struck out upon the tide.

"Now, dearest, how are you?" he asked, after a few minutes' silence had assured him of his strength.

"You must not think me selfish, but I am very happy," she answered, unconsciously tightening her clasp upon his shoulders with a tender pressure.

"God bless you," he murmured, more in response to the tender clasp than to the words she whispered, although they were marvelously sweet.

"But you?" she asked, "how is it with you? Do you feel my weight too heavily?"

"Oh, no, I do not feel it at all, but rather, darling, the touch of your hand is a buoy to my strength. It gives energy and life to all my being. I could swim thus to Fortress Monroe."

Five minutes more and they were half-way across and could begin to distinguish objects on the bank.

"Ah, they see us from the shore and are coming to help," she cried, as she espied a lady running down the bank, closely followed by two negro men.

"It may be good in them, but I do not want their help. I wish to save my darling all by myself. Oh, Abigail, do you know that I would be glad to die for you?"

"Yes, I know it, I understand it, for I feel it all myself. But, sir, you have saved me, and all by yourself, for had you not come I must have perished. Ah, how good it was in you to come."

"But how came it that you were left there all alone by yourself?"

"I was in my stateroom. I had secured a room and was—was—trying to—to—hide away from all that happy throng, and I did not know, until I felt the boat as it grounded ;

and then the smoke came so blinding that I could only make my way to where you found me. Oh ! I must always bless you for coming."

The lady on shore had now reached the landing and was hurriedly encouraging the darkies to launch a boat.

"Now," she cried, as the boat floated high and the negroes sprang in. "Now, pull for your lives, and I'll give you five silver dollars if you save him."

"Yes-um we'll git dar, an' doan yer skeer yourseff, Miss Tally," and off they pulled for dear life.

"And you, little Jack," she continued, as a grinning little imp of ebony came puffing down the bank, "run back to the house and tell papa to send the carriage. Oh ! I do believe there are two of them ! Yes, indeed there are two," adjusting her glass and looking again, "and one is a lady ! Run, Jack, and tell him to hurry with the carriage and to put in the cloaks and the blankets and the brandy. Pull, Ben ! pull, Dick ! pull for your lives, you rascals, you ! Ah ! that is brave ! Huzza ! you are gaining on them fast ! Pull ! pull ! both together ! Ah ! there, you have them now ! Safe ! safe ! thank God

they are safe ! Huzza ! huzza ! ” and dancing in wild delight she threw up her hat unmindful of the breeze that swept it, ribbons, feathers and all like a kite, far out into the river, as she saw the negroes drop their oars and lift a lady in, and followed by a man dripping like a great Newfoundland dog, as he pulled himself over the gunwale.

The boat was turned and rapidly pulled in to shore.

“ Ah ! you are safe ! We saw the burning boat and then we saw you jump in. We could see through the telescope, and when we saw you drifting with the current to this side we ran down to help. It was a brave swim you made. I don’t much believe I could have beaten it myself. I am so glad that you could hold out. It was a fearful thing to see you struggling so far out in the river,” rattled the young lady, in encouraging volubility, as she stood up to her ankles in mud, to welcome them to the land.

“ And we must thank you for your help——” commenced the gentleman.

“ No ! no ! ” quickly interrupting, “ it was nothing but right. And besides it wasn’t really so much, after all. I have swam across to the lower point yonder, myself. And the lady—I hope you are not quite

overcome," turning her attention to Abigail.

"Oh, no! I do not feel the slightest discomfort; only gratitude and love and gladness," putting her hands to her face and bursting into tears.

For a moment he suffered her to weep—pent-up nature required this much—and then, kneeling before her, he took her in his arms and kissed the tears away.

The lady, respecting the feelings that swayed them both, turned away her face.

"Ah! here is papa with the cloaks. Is the carriage coming?" as an elderly gentleman came puffing down the bank, loaded with cloaks and wraps.

"Yes, the carriage is coming, but I have brought the brandy with me. Here, my dear miss, let me offer you a stiff horn——"

"Oh, no, no! papa, see, or, no, you mustn't look. Give me the wraps and cloak and you turn your back," snatching the vestments from him and pouncing upon the shrinking lady. Her feminine instincts were quick to discover the skirtless predicament of her sister-woman and in an instant she was hovering over her, winding wrap upon wrap, and cloak over cloak, until there was danger of suffocation. "Now, papa, you

may look," after the draping had been finished, or rather suspended for the lack of another cloak, and the muffled lady stood blushing before him.

"Ah, yes! I must beg your pardon, miss, for my indiscretion, but really I wouldn't have noticed your—your—ah! hem—anything, if Sallie hadn't told me. You must excuse me!" bowing rather sheepishly, with his good-natured face as red as a beet. "And now you will have a dram?"

"I am sure it will help you," said her husband, taking the glass for her.

Without question she took the glass and drank its contents. Had he suggested a glass of hydrocyanic acid she would have swallowed it down with a smile.

"And now you?" she asked, considerate of his comfort.

"Oh, yes! certainly," and had it been a potion of the same deadly drug, he would have as willingly drank it down from her hands. "And here, sir," filling the glass and waving it to the gentleman, "are my most humble regards," and then with a bow to the young lady, "and you, fair lady, must allow me to pledge my most grateful duty."

The young lady acknowledged the health

by a charming little courtsey, and the old gentleman chipped in :

“Thanks, sir, both for myself and my daughter ; and here is a coat for you. It is none too cool, but until we can get you to the house and get off those soggy clothes, it will be best to wrap up a little.”

The young gentleman felt no pressing need of the precaution, but he accepted the friendly offer and donned the coat, which, by a happy chance, was a passable fit.

“Come, now, the carriage is ready. We must get you both to the house, and have dry clothing, if not put you to bed,” continued the hospitable gentleman, leading the way to the carriage.

“Let the ladies ride. I should prefer the walk. It will strengthen me. My legs are a little stiff,” Winston begged, after handing the ladies in. The carriage drove on and the gentlemen walked after, Winston in his stocking-feet ; but the grassy lawn was as soft as a carpet, and his heart so strangely light and happy that he felt as if he was walking on a bed of roses.

Arrived at the house the first thing was to hurry them to rooms and to see to the bath and dry clothing.

The lavender-scented wardrobe of Miss

Vincent was ample for any emergency, and had Abigail—Abigail once more, now and forever—listened to its hospitable suggestions, she would have found it difficult to walk under the avalanche of snowy *lingerie*, cambric, lawn and mull, urged upon her. And then as to gowns: what would she wear? “A lilac silk; a heliotrope cashmere; a mauve barege; a pink challie; a rose organdie, or would you like this black alpaca? We are luckily nearly the same size and figure, so that any of them will fit you, and they are all equally at your service.”

“If you please, I will wear this organdie; it looks so fresh and bright, and my heart is so fresh, and light, and glad, that I should wish everything to be in harmony with its gladness.”

“Certainly, yes; and it will so well become your—well, I must speak it—your fresh and radiant beauty. And now for boots; I am quite in despair; you can never wear one of my enormous galoshes; so you will have to stagger around in a pair of my slippers, until Clary can dry yours.”

“Yes! if you please. The slippers will do charmingly, I am sure, and mine can soon dry.”

“To be sure. Here, Clary, get a sponge and brush and dry the lady’s boots. Put hot peas in them, that will soon dry them. And here, you must clean mine too, the mud is nearly to their tops. And, Clary, tell Ben to go down to the landing and look for my hat ; it blew in the river. Tell him to find it and give it to Dolly.”

The thin boots were easily dried, and by the time the magnificent suit of hair had been taken down, straightened out and admired, and then coiled again into a crown of queenly beauty, Clary came in with them, and lacing them on, Abigail Winston stepped forth to go down into the drawing-room to join the others, as bright, fresh, rosy and sweet, a lovely bride as ever stepped forth to meet her heart’s chosen lord.

The gentleman’s toilet had not been nearly so elaborate, nor so troublesome to select. Suitable, easy-fitting unmentionables had been found, and a plain dress suit well-becoming to the tall manly form from Mr. Vincent, Jr.’s wardrobe, put him in satisfied countenance with himself and all the world. No ill effects of the plunge nor the swim was felt by either of the young persons, but, rather invigorated by the plunge and its supplemental bath at the house, they felt a

warm glow of health and strength and youthful *vivre* tingling every vein and dancing in every nerve.

The gentlemen had preceded the ladies to the drawing-room, and Winston was explaining the nature of the disaster when they came in.

David arose, as Abigail paused for a moment in the door, as if uncertain still of her welcome. Never before had she appeared to such an advantage, so radiantly lovely ; so bewitchingly sweet ; so gloriously beautiful ; and then when she caught the love-light in his eye, her very being was beatified, and she stood, in her gladness, more angelic than human.

For a little while, absolutely spellbound in the bliss of adoration, he stood and gazed upon her, and then he stepped forward to meet her. Drawing her to his breast he tenderly kissed her and then taking her hand he turned to his host :

“Mr. Vincent, this is my wife, Mrs. Winston. I always knew that women were gracious and sweet, but this one has taught me that they can be noble, grand and true as well.”

“I am glad to know Mrs. Winston, and do most heartily congratulate you upon

the possession of such a woman for your wife. And you, Madam, I must congratulate you upon your happy escape. It was a fearful thing to see the burning of that magnificent boat."

"Yes! Thanks for your kindness," smilingly shaking the friendly hand. And then turning to Miss Vincent she continued: "And you, Miss Vincent, you must allow me to present my husband. If women can be gracious men can be brave. At the peril of his own he saved my life. Sweet as it was before, it is doubly sweet to me now."

"Yes, Mr. Winston," offering a friendly hand. "I witnessed your peril and your courage; the one was appalling, as the other was sublime, and I, too, must congratulate you upon your deliverance."

"Thank you, but it was my wife's," ah! was there ever such a honeyed word on his tongue before? "It was my wife's courage that inspired my own. And you, Miss Vincent, I must thank you again for your timely assistance. And your negroes—I must reward them!"

"Oh! never mind, you. I have already done that. I promised them five silver dollars if they saved you in time."

"Then you must let me add ten more to

that. Please do ! But—humph ! Well, well ! I do believe that I left my pocket-book in my coat ! Yes, it is gone,” feeling blankly for his pocket-book.

“Oh ! did you ? I hope it was not a serious loss,” cried the young lady.

“Ah, no ! scarcely a hundred dollars, and a few unimportant papers. The loss is not serious, and does not greatly matter, only, it is a little embarrassing to find myself thrown so completely upon your charity.”

“Oh ! we are only too glad to serve you,” interrupted the hospitable host. “And never mind the boys ; I will settle it with them.”

“I was more fortunate with mine,” said Abigail, handing him her *porte-monnaie*. “I had it in my dress-pocket and it is safe. Please take it ?”

The tender love-light in his eyes thanked her as he took it ; and opening he took two gold pieces and handing them to Miss Vincent, said :

“Please give these to the men with our thanks.”

There was a little hitch in closing the inner clasp of the *porte-monnaie*, and looking to adjust it he saw, suddenly flashed to light from its long hiding-place in the inner pocket, the little, thin, well-worn wedding-

ring. He recognized it with a thrill, and taking it out reverently kissed it, and turning to Abigail, said :

“Ah ! here is the ring ! Blessed ring ! I must put it on again,” and taking her hand he placed it upon her finger, to be buried with her when she comes to die.

The stranger witnesses did not understand the reverential tremor in his voice, nor the tear in her eye, but they instinctively felt that they were standing in the presence of a mortal love made holy by suffering and by sorrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTERMATH.

A FEW moments' silence, almost holy in its solemn hush, followed, and then came the long, hoarse signal-whistle of a passing steamer, floating up from the river into the hall and windows.

“Ah ! that is the *Taney*, signaling the wreck. She is going to land for the passengers,” cried Mr. Vincent, starting out upon the veranda to see.

“Indeed ! And cannot we hail it ? We

must get back to the capital at once, or our friends will give us out as lost," said Winston, following eagerly after.

"No, that is impossible. She will land nearly a mile above, on the opposite side, and will not drop back for me. She is nearly an hour behind, anyway."

"But how am I to communicate with the city? It is urgent. Our friends already think us lost, and the news must not be sent abroad."

"I can send the carriage to Alexandria; it is but an hour's drive, and you can catch a boat there. There is a ferry every half hour. It is now five-twenty, Jim can have you there in time for the six-thirty boat. I wish, though, that you would allow me to send a messenger to the city, and you stop with us until to-morrow. Mrs. Winston, I am sure needs the rest."

"If so, if she needs it, we will stay," turning a loving glance to his wife, who with Miss Vincent had followed them out.

"Oh, no! If possible, we should go at once. Poor Nanny, I know, will be distracted when she learns that I am missing. And Mrs. Whiting! Oh! we must relieve them if we can," said Abigail, in sad concern for the anxiety of Nanny.

“Very well. I appreciate your solicitude, and will excuse you ; only you must promise to come down and spend a whole week with us before Congress adjourns.”

“It will be a pleasure to us to make your better acquaintance, and we will come ;” and thus settled, the carriage was ordered, and in a few moments more they were rapidly bowling along the well-graded road on the way to Alexandria.

“And now, darling, tell me ?” he asked, settling back by her side on the springy seat of the phaeton, as they whirled along the pleasant way beneath the green trees.

“Of my life abroad, and how I came home ?” she asked.

“Yes, yes, tell all. I wish to know everything about you. Where all you have been ? And how you came ? Ah ! you cannot know how fondly my poor heart has followed, or tried to follow you, in all these days of weary exile.”

“I think I know now, for my own heart has felt all of the sad unrest. I could hear from you, though, through the press, and that gave me comfort. Oh ! I was so proud of your advancement, of your distinction——”

“And do you know, darling, that I owe it all to you ?” he interrupted.

“I should be glad to know that I had a little, if ever so little, part in your success.”

“No ; not a little ; not a part only, but a whole, an entirety. All, all that I am I owe to you. And, sweet one, I am so glad that I do. But tell on of yourself. Never mind me, but of your own dear self ?”

“Well, my life was not altogether a blank. I loved you all the while and should have loved you always, that is, unless a happier one should have taken you from me and made it a sin for me to love you ‘at all,’ with a little shudder at the vanished possibility, soothed by a tighter pressure of his arm around her waist. “But it was a lonesome waiting, and my heart would sometimes grow faint and sick with its impatient longing, but I could find courage to bear it, and, naturally of a glad temperament, I made the best of it. I had good friends ; very kind and very sweet ; I had a pleasant home near Florence, where we spent the winter, and in the summer we would travel. We visited all the cities of Europe, and Palestine and Egypt. Of course it was exciting and curious, if not really pleasant, and it served to divert my—my—my, well I must say it, my sorrowing thoughts from home.”

“My poor wing-weary dove.”

“Yes, at times I grew weary, and was almost glad when the November frosts would send us back to Florence.”

“Ah, tell me of Florence, and of your country home! Do you know that I, too, heard from you? That I had a little bird, constantly on the wing bringing me tidings of my Princess.”

“Oh! did you? Then I hope it was a nightingale, silver-throated and sweet, and it told you of all my pleasant dreams of you, and the many happy happy thoughts I was all the while thinking of you.”

“And did you dream of me, darling? I must bless you for your dreams. And I know, too, that you were thoughtful of me; kindly thoughtful of me. I heard, quite by accident, of your letter to Mr. Sneed, and oh, darling! while it shamed me with a sense of my own unworthiness, I had to bless you then for your sweetness. And do you know that that one unselfish, unlooked-for act of yours, was the die that turned the tide and saved me from defeat.”

“Not unselfish, darling, for I held you then, in my secret soul as mine own; my husband then as now. Your success then was dear to me as it is now or can ever be.”

“This is very sweet. Can I ever love you enough for all this?”

“It was certainly sweet to me, for all the while I felt, in the secret and most holy depths of my soul absolutely sure of you.

“‘Twas not the want of love’s assurance ;
It was not doubting what thou wert ;
But ’twas the too, too long endurance
Of absence that distressed my heart.’

And somehow it would come to me, even in my moments of deepest repining, that we would some day, in the happy future, come together. That you were all the world to me ; my lord and my master ; and that you would some blissful day come to claim your own.”

“Oh, darling ! I did so long to come, but I felt so unworthy, so wretched and mean that I was ashamed to come. But, sweet one, tell me on ; all about your life and home at Florence !”

“Ah, and did not your little bird tell you all ?”

“No, not all ; for it was not a silver throat, but rather of evil tongue and black-winged as Poe’s gloomy raven, and it was only happy when tantalizing me with stories of other men’s happiness.”

“How ?” wonderingly.

"Ah ! Jake Gorman," laughingly.

"I hope that did not distress you ?" with a pretty blush. "I was really sorry for the gentleman. But I could not help it," in a little dismay at something, she could not imagine what.

"Oh, no, of course not. Neither could poor Jake. Only I was so glad of it. It was such a weight lifted off my heart when I heard that poor Jake had been so neatly done for. Ha, ha——"

"Are you really laughing at me ?" drawing up a little stiffly.

"Oh, no ; not you, darling. I was only laughing at poor Jake, flabbergasted, ha, ha ! yes, that's what Miss Pauline called it. But, darling," sobering up a little as Abigail tried to pull a little farther away, "what became of the Count ?"

"The Count Frangapani ?"

"Oh, oh ! and there was another one ?"

"There was a Count Frangapani."

"Ah, was there ? But that was not the one my bird croaked so ominously about. It was a Count Pacetti."

"Oh," with a smile. "Yes, Count Pacetti ; and I must tell you of Count Pacetti. Such a pleasant gentleman ! A true nobleman in nature as well as in rank ; and we had such

a pleasant time and such a nice little wedding."

"Wedding?" interrupting with a positive snort, "with whom?"

"Yes, wedding, with the Count Pacetti."

"You don't mean to tell me that you——"

"Gave Miss Whiting and the Count a wedding? Of course I did, as elegant an affair as I could possibly devise. And it was in truth a very pleasant occasion, and they are a very happy couple, and I do wish them all the happiness they both so well deserve."

"Oh, darling, you must forgive me, but I am positively silly; this happiness is all so new, so surprising, so unexpected, and I feel myself so utterly unworthy of it all, that I cannot fully realize its sober truth. You are so sweet, so dear, so precious, that I cannot quite feel certain that you are indeed my own; and I had heard that it was you the Count was wishing to marry."

"Then your bird must have had a raven's throat as well as wing," with a happy smile.

"And this other? The Count Frangapani?"

"Is a venerable old gentleman, who was very kind to me, and who made my sojourn at Florence more pleasant than it otherwise would have been. His friendship was not

only a pleasure and an honor, but a protection as well. No one near Florence would think of offending a protegee of the Count Frangapani."

"Then I must bless the count for befriending my darling. But tell me how came you to leave Florence, and when? You must not blame my presumption too much, but everything about you, about your life and your doings, is so precious to me that I must know them all."

"You are good, and I think that I understand you, and I wish to tell you all; I do not know of even a thought that I would care to conceal. We left Florence in March, immediately after Miss Whiting's marriage, we came over to England and spent the spring in journeying through the three kingdoms, traveling at leisure from place to place. On the tenth instant we sailed from Liverpool to New York, where we landed on the twentieth, and then the next day we came on here. We were going directly through on our way to Richmond, but missed connection yesterday morning and had to stop over. We heard that you were to speak, and I so longed to see and hear you, that I prevailed on Mr. Whiting to secure tickets for the gallery and we went; and oh,

darling, my very heart seemed melted into a fount of gratitude and love as I saw and listened to you. And then, when after you had finished, and you chanced to look up and I caught your eye, I would have given my life to have crawled to your feet and beg you to take me home to your heart. Oh, darling, did you know me?"

"I recognized you then, sweet one, as the mistress of my soul, the queen of my life, but I did not know that it was you, my very, very own. And then," he went on, after kissing her hand, "when I saw you again at the opera, I was wretched, for, Abigail, do you know that then a guilty thought, the first that ever tainted my manhood, entered, my brain, and overwhelmed my reason."

"No, no;" with a tender protest.

"Yes, when I saw you then, so lovely, so radiant, so fair to look upon, my truth, my faith to my absent wife, the wife whom I had learned to love and so longed to see, was shaken and destroyed, and I felt guiltily drawn towards you, the beautiful stranger whom I had never seen before. Ah, it was a horrible thought, and I felt like killing myself for my unfaith to the woman whom I had already so cruelly wronged. Oh, darling, paradoxical as it may seem, my love to

you then, which should have been my sweetest joy, was in truth the keenest sorrow I ever felt."

"Ah, happy paradox! But I understand it. Your heart was wiser than your head, your love was stronger than your reason. Your heart knew me, sweetheart, and your love came out to claim its own. Ah, true love!"

"And you do not despise me for my treason, and can forgive me for my unfaith to the poor absent one?"

"But it was no treason; your unfaith to her, the absent Grace, was the highest evidence of your truth to me, the present Abigail. But oh, darling, had it not been me? Had it been some other, more deserving even than I, what would I have done?"

"You would have had to despise me, dearest, as I despised myself; for had it not been you, much as I had learned to love you, the poor wandering Abigail, had this other beautiful one whom I hold so fondly now, been indeed some one else, I should have renounced my wife and followed her to the ends of the earth."

"Then I am glad that it was your wife, your own, own Abigail, and that I am she, and not a stranger to steal my darling away

from myself. Ah, happy me ! happy Abigail, but poor Grace, how I must pity her."

"And yet, dearest, there was no Grace ; I never thought of you as Grace ; it was Abigail, sweet, sweet Abigail, all the while, and it was so stupid in me not to have known you last night."

"But let me tell you of last night, or no—no, it is nothing now, and I need never to tell."

"Tell anything, darling, that will not pain you to tell. Henceforth our hearts must be one, our thoughts as one."

"It was only a gossip, a cruel gossip, connecting you with Miss Stanley."

"Yes, I can understand what it was, but it was all a mistake.' Miss Stanley and her father, Senator Stanley, both too well understand my position for my attention to her to be misunderstood. Every one sufficiently interested in my friendship knows very well that I am a married man. And to-day, after I met you, I told them that you were my much injured wife. Oh, darling, did you not pity me to-day when Milnes introduced us ?"

"No, not pity. I should have had to blame you to pity, but I was very sorry that we met as we did as strangers and

before strangers. I did so wish to be away, and I hardly knew what to do, to stand and brave it out or to run away and hide."

"You did admirably—that is for my relief ; as for yourself, though, you should have openly denounced me as the craven poltroon I felt myself to be."

"No, no. David—may I call you David ?"

"Yes, if you please. Any name will be sweet from you, the endearing sweetness of your voice would make the name Beelzebub cherubic."

"Ah, it is sweet in you to think it ; but, David—ah, that is bold, but then I have murmured it so often, and blessed it so often that it is precious to me ; but, David, I think that I understand you, and have understood all the while. It was a cruel misapprehension that has stood between us all the while. I knew you were not the wretch your morbid sensitiveness made you think yourself. I knew that you were all that I know you to be now, generous, truthful, brave and good, and oh, darling, I do love you so. But," after recovering from the confusion of kisses that followed, "But, darling ! I must tell you all, and you must not despise me utterly for being so weak, but last night when that heartless gossip—oh, that a woman's tongue

can be so sharp !—told it so cruelly that you had secured your divorce, from your faithless wife——”

“Oh darling ; she could not have spoken such a lie ?”

“Yes, and it cut me to the soul ; and that you were soon to be married to the lady who looked so happy by your side, I—I had to falter, and in despair, I resolved to kill my love, my sweet love, while it was yet innocent ; to kill it and bury it away before it became a sin for me to love you longer, and to help me to kill it forever, without the hope of resurrection, I—I—I oh, darling, forgive me——”

“Say no more, sweet one ! I understand, it was brave, it was good in you to do so.”

“But you do not know, I went so far in my desperation as to write to another, a kind, true-hearted gentleman, who was acquainted with my unhappy past and who would, I think, have been willing to take me, heart-sore as I was.”

“Darling, you need not tell,” interrupting and stopping her mouth with a kiss.

“Marse, will yer go ter de tavern or muss I drive ter de landin’ ?” asked their Jehu, as he drew up in the good old Virginia town of Alexandria.

“To the ferry, of course. We only have five minutes.”

The *Taney* had passed and already spread the news of the disaster with exaggerated reports of the casualties, each vehement reporter fixing the loss in exact ratio to his or her own danger ; some stating it as high as fifty souls lost, and others all the way down to a dozen, but all agreeing upon one particular loss, the saddest of them all, the young and brilliant Congressman, Winston, who was bodily burned alive while heroically trying to rescue a strange lady and her five little children, two at the breast, all seven, Congressman, mother, and the five little innocents, cremated in each other's arms.

The truth of the matter happily is; there was but one single soul lost, a truly loyal pilgrim from Skowhegan, who had imbibed too much patriotism at the tomb of Washington and was too soundly sleeping off its somniferous effects to be awakened in time to scramble to the boats, and he went up, like Elijah of old, in a blaze of fire, without knowing, perhaps, how he got there. This, with a few bruised heads and a half dozen broken shins, caused by the beastly scramble for the boats, was all the loss to life and limb.

David and Abigail listened with a vague feeling of amazed horror at the story of their cremation, but did not venture to contradict it. It was only when they had landed and he had secured a cab, that he realized the importance of correcting the harrowing report:

"Drive to the telegraph office as soon as you can," he ordered, and in fifteen minutes they were at the door of the office.

"Wait here, a minute," to cabby; "please excuse me a second, darling," this to his wife, "I wish to send a telegram;" and out he jumped and in the office he rushed.

"Have you sent off any reports concerning the burning of the *Sunrise*?" he asked of the manager.

"Yes, as hard as we can clatter, and have a thousand words on file yet to send. Here is a blank, write it out if you want to send one and it will take its turn," shoving a blank-pad in his face.

"Let me ask if the death of Winston has been dispatched?"

"Yes, that's the best part of the news; that is I mean it's the cream of the whole joke—that is to say, it's the most important item of the whole affair. Without that the thing would hardly be worth reporting."

"Then, sir, I am sorry to spoil your sensation, but Winston is not dead at all. I am Winston, and, as you can see, am not at all worse for the scare."

By Jiminy! is that so? Are you quite certain of it?"

"Quite certain. I swam to the Virginia shore and was picked up by a skiff. My wife too, is safe; indeed, sir, I think that all were saved. I was, I think, the last to leave the boat, and all were well out of it when I plunged in the river. Please have your operators to make the necessary correction, so far as I am concerned?"

"Yes, I will; I am glad you told me. Boys, here, each of you add a correction to each message that you send, so: 'Later, Winston and lady are safe; swam ashore in a skiff.' Will that do?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very well, who will pay for this?"

"Send the bill to the National Hotel and I will pay it."

"All right, I am glad that you are safe," nodding his congratulations, but adding *sotto voce*: "But it's a blamed pity to spoil the milk in the cocoanut; his death was worth all the balance; however, it was a good streak of luck for us, and the corrections

will be so much more. I'll make him pay for every one of them."

"Now, John, drive to the National as fast as you can," to the driver. "They were flashing it all over the land that we were lost," jumping in the cab, and clasping his wife's hand, doubtless to assure himself that she was really safe. "I was just in time."

"Poor Nanny, I know that she is distracted," and David thought it was very sweet in her to have thought for the anxiety of her negro maid, at such a moment, even though it must put him a little out of countenance.

In a minute more they were at the National, where the office and corridors were thronged with an excited crowd, listening to the details of the terrible affair. As gently as he could he slipped her through the ladies' entrance up to the ladies' drawing room, where, calling a chambermaid, Abigail asked :

"Has Mrs. Whiting, the lady in thirty-six, returned?"

"Yes, mum, but the lady in thirty-eight ain't. She was drowned, or burnt up alive, they don't know which, and her nigger woman has got the hysterics wuss nor white fokes. She thest seemed at fust like she'd

go inter fits, but now she's as sullen as a 'possum."

"Well, you go to Mrs. Whiting and tell her that her friend, Mrs. Winston, was not lost, that she is here and quite safe and well."

"Well, mum, but she ain't. I tells you, mum, that she was lost, her and Mr. Winston, both ! Ever'body says so, 'acaze ever'body seed them. They are both dead ; dead as the boy that eat the goobers on the burning deck ! That is what Mr. Jolly says. I hearn him tell it myself to Mr. Tenny, and them was his very words."

"Never mind what Mr. Jolly said ; you go to Mrs. Whiting and tell her to come to me. I am Mrs. Winston."

"Yes, mum," courtesying out but muttering to herself as she went : "I don't believe a word of it. I know Mr. Jolly knows better than she does."

In a moment more Mrs. Whiting, with hair down and eyes red with weeping, came rushing in, and catching her friend in her arms, let the cooing sobs and kisses, and murmured blessings tell how glad, glad was the surprising joy.

"And now, Alice, I want to present my husband. You know how I have loved him ! but

I cannot ever, ever love him enough. It was his great love that saved me," said the happy Abigail, releasing herself from the fond embrace and turning to her husband.

Mrs. Whiting looked the surprise she could not hide, and then offering her hand said :

"That he is dear to you makes him my friend. We had heard that you were both lost."

"No! I never came near it," a little coldly, for somehow in his heart he felt a little bitterness against the Whitings for their selfish and ungenerous abandonment of his darling.

"And now I must go to Nanny," said Abigail, turning and hurrying up to her room.

The doubting chambermaid had somewhat prepared the negro for the reappearance of the mistress she was mourning for dead, or the sudden sight of her would have quite upset her superstitious mind and sent her shrieking out of the window. As it was she had to stand and stare, in dumb amazement at the apparition, until Abigail spoke :

"It is really I, Nanny! What are you wondering at? Don't you see that I am safe?"

“Yes, bless de Lord it is you. Oh ! my darling Miss Grace, I is so glad ter see yer. But whar you git dem clothes ? Has yon bin ter hebben shore ’nuff, and is dem de dresses de angels wear ?” in new wonder at the strange attire of her mistress.

“No ! a kind lady loaned me these, and you must help me to take them off and dress me in my own. But, Nanny, you must not call me Miss Grace any longer. I am Abigail now ! David has come and I am Abigail ! so hurry up and dress me before he, your Master David, comes,” and in the grateful task of dressing her fair young mistress Nanny forgot the wonder, and only loved her the more because of the great grief of the hour before.

And then just as the last hook in her bodice had been fastened, a timid, half-shamed knock, as if it were afraid of being heard, came from without, and the blood, incarnadining her face and neck and even the pinky ears told who it was.

“It is your Master David ! I will open the door myself and bid him come ! And you—you may go, Nanny !”

It was David (I wonder what little bird it was that told him where the nest of his love was hidden ?) and with a gentle

kiss she greeted him ; and then she led him to the table, where she had written the night before, and taking up the letter addressed to Lord Knightleigh, she extended it to him :

“ Here, David, is the letter I wrote last night to Lord Knightleigh ! I am going to burn it. Would you care to read it ? ”

“ No, darling ! that it pained you to write it makes it hateful to me ! I am sorry, though, for poor Knightleigh,” with an ineffable sense of his own possession.

“ As I am sorry for poor Miss Stanley,” she answered with a smile as self-assuring. And touching the letter to the gas jet she threw it on the hearth and watched it melt into ashes.

“ And now, darling, I came to take you down to dinner, but first we will have to show ourselves in the parlor. I wish to show everybody my queen.”

Winston's appearance in the rotunda had been no less surprising to his friends than Abigail's had been to Mrs. Whiting, and he had to mount a chair and make a little speech in order to convince them that he was indeed alive and in the flesh. But the surprise was equally great and far more dramatic now as he led his beautiful and blushing bride in the parlor and introduced her as

his wife, "the grandest, the bravest and sweetest woman in all the world."

The next Saturday morning they crossed over to Alexandria and drove down the river to the Vincent mansion, to pay the promised visit and to thank them again for all their kindness.

The next week the tiresome Congress adjourned and they went home. And oh, what a joyous home-going it was! Augusta was almost hysterical in the exuberance of her joy, and wept and smiled, and blessed, and kissed by turns, as she held Abigail to her heart. Judge Winston could only hold her head against his breast and, tenderly patting the flossy crown, silently bless her; while the babies looked on in infantile wonder and disgust.

And then after the Judge had released her, and Walter Graves had exacted a brotherly tribute from her rosy cheeks, the babies (bless the babies!) themselves had to be paraded.

"Here, my sister, are my treasures," cried the proud mother, holding up the little Abigail in one arm and pulling the little David forward with the other. "This," presenting baby, "is my darlingest one—little Abigail; tis your aunty, darling."

“Abigail ? For me ?” with a halo of gladness lighting her face, and a tear trembling on the lashes.

“Yes, Grace Abigail, for you.”

“Oh, I must bless you, sweet, sweet, sweet !” she cried, catching the little darling in her arms, and deluging it with kisses.

“And here is mother’s little man ; my little David.”

“Ah, David ! I must bless you too,” and kneeling she took the little fellow in her disengaged arm, and softly kissed him, and then, with a child on each arm, and both clinging lovingly to her neck, she stood up, a living, breathing impersonation of womanhood, perfect in loveliness, perfect in truth and perfect in gladness.

There was only the shadow of one sadness to chasten all this happiness ; the absence of that dear, kind and loving old face ; the pleasant smile, the homely but gentle greeting which she could never see or hear again.

“Oh, if he could only see this, could only know my happiness,” she murmured to her husband, as they walked to her room.

“He does see it, darling, I can feel his presence blessing his child, and blessing me. And, darling, I am sure that in his prescient

love, he saw all this the day he died. Do you know that I was with him ? ”

“ Oh, were you ? ” gladly.

“ Yes, I lifted him to his bed, and I held his hand as his soul went out to meet his God. His last words were blessings upon you and upon me. Let us cherish his memory, darling, as a precious legacy, but we should not grieve that he is gone before. I only wish that my own end, after a life so useful, may be as peaceful as his.”

“ Oh, darling, you do not know how glad it makes me to know this, that you were with him when he died. Ah, had I only known it then, what an age of doubt and misery and despair would have been spared me ! For, David, you must know that that was the darkest hour of my life. The hour I read your father’s letter, telling me how utterly I stood alone in the world, and not a word of sympathy from you. It was then for the first time that I was ready to despair of your love, of your pity, for I felt that if you were ever to come, that you would come then, when I so sorely needed your love and your sympathy.”

“ My poor darling, I did sympathize with you, and my heart was almost breaking to be with you, but I felt my own unworthiness

too keenly, my dishonor too acutely. To have seen you would have been to shame my own manhood, nay ! worse, it would have been an insult to you, my darling, a reproach to your womanly dignity. Ah, dearest, you may never know what a misery was mine. To its cruel banishment from its love, my heart had to bear the additional weight of remorse, and that was the saddest load of all."

"Ah, yes ! but it is over now. We have both suffered ; but let us hope that our sufferings was the darkness out of which must come the brightness of our after-joys !"

"Ah, yes ! The gladness of holding you thus, my darling, was cheaply earned by all that I suffered then."

The mansion on Colbert Avenue was reopened, and all Bergovania was startled into curious delight by cards, the next week, for a reception by Mr. and Mrs. David R. Winston.

It was a brilliant reception. All Bergovania was there to find its fairest beauty, hopelessly and helplessly eclipsed by the sweeter, fairer and rarer beauty of the peerless bride.

David would have been very proud of his queen had he not been so soberly happy.

And Abigail, the songs that so rapturously thrilled all who heard her sing, with a surprising gladness, were but a sweet concordance of the joy that was filling her own, as she sang.

"And now, darling," he said, as he led her back to the parlor, after seeing the last of their guests to the door, "if you are not too tired, one more song—a song for me."

"I am never too tired to sing for you," she answered sweetly, and taking her place at the piano, she sang one of her most tender, touching songs.

"Ah, that is very sweet! You must have caught it in a dream from the angels," he said, stooping and raising her to his arms and softly kissing her.

And with that music thrilling his soul, and that loving kiss melting her heart, I will leave them, David and Abigail, tried by suffering and purified, refined and exalted by the ordeal.

B. F. SAWYER.

Bergovania, 1894.

THE END.



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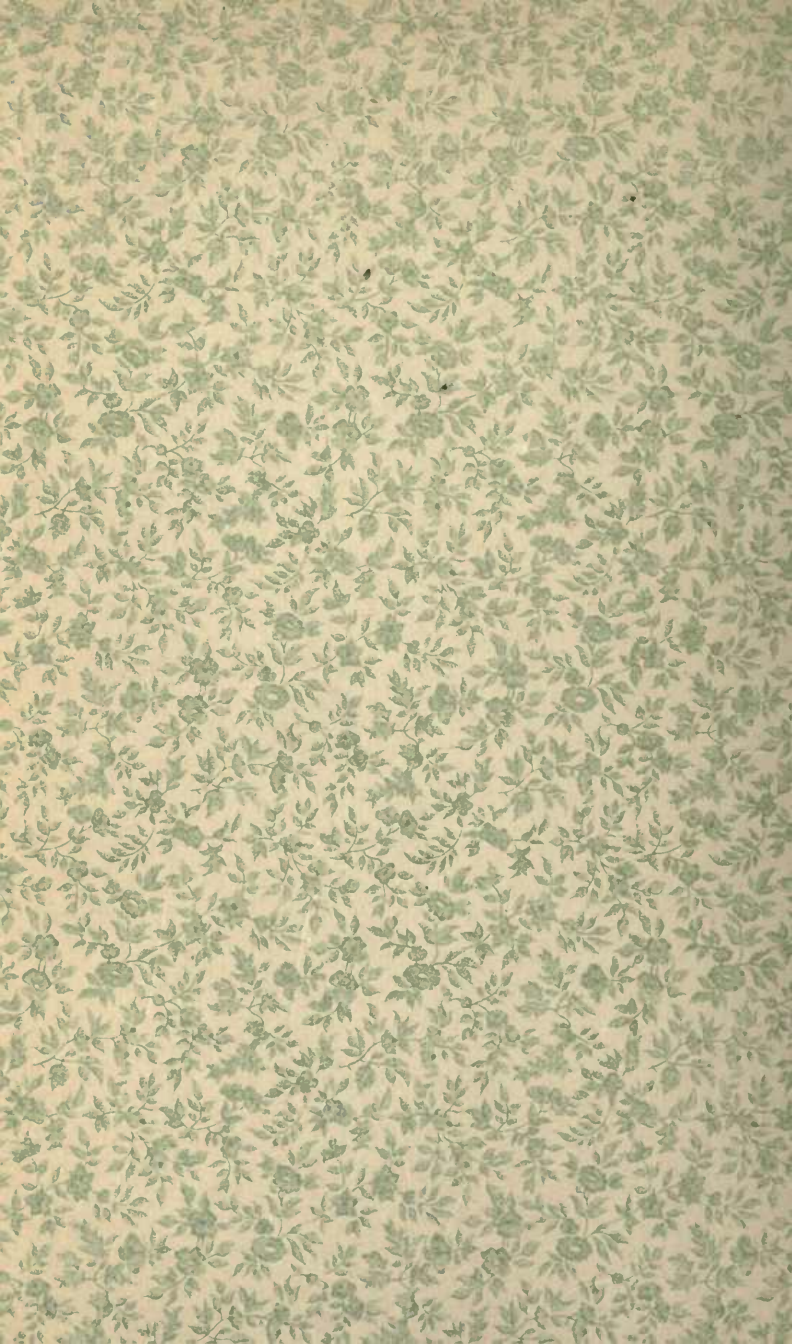
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